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SCENES FROM DICKENS

BOOKS BY ERNEST PERTWEE

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MR. PICKWICK

[Frontispiece

Scenes from Dickens

*FOR DRAWING-ROOM AND PLATFORM
ACTING*

ADAPTED BY
GUY PERTWEE

EDITED BY
ERNEST PERTWEE

WITH 48 COSTUME-PLATES BY EDWARD HANDLEY-READ



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PREFACE

IN presenting this book to the public I take this opportunity of stating that these scenes have one and all been adapted from the works of the great novelist with reverent care to keep as near the original text as possible.

Hitherto there has been no such extensive collection of scenes from the novels of Charles Dickens, and it is hoped that the present volume will find favour both with amateurs and with professional actors.

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ERNEST PERTWEE.

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DAVID COPPERFIELD AND HIS AUNT

FROM

DAVID COPPERFIELD

IN TWO SCENES

CHARACTERS.

DAVID COPPERFIELD.

Aged about 12 years, dressed in rags, and very dusty, having walked all the way from London.

Miss BETSY TROTWOOD—*David's Aunt.*

A tall, hard-featured woman, by no means ill-looking, but rather austere. Her hair is grey, and is arranged in two plain divisions, under a mob cap, with two side pieces under her chin. Her dress is lavender colour and very neat, and scantily made. At her side she wears a gentleman's gold watch, chain and seals. Linen collar and wristbands.

Mr. MURDSTONE—*David's Stepfather.*

A tall, dark man with very black, glossy hair, and side whiskers.

Miss MURDSTONE.

Dark, tall and forbidding looking. Heavy eyebrows that nearly meet over a large nose.

Mr. DICK.

A stout, grey-haired, florid man. Wears loose grey morning-coat and waistcoat and white trousers. He constantly rattles money in his pocket as if rather proud of it.

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JANET—*A maidservant*

A pretty girl of about 19 years. Very neatly dressed.

Period : About 1830.

SCENE I.

Parlour at Miss Betsy Trotwood's cottage at Dover. Door R., and large windows, back opening into garden. Numerous flowers in pots and beds. A tall press L., containing a number of bottles, etc. Fireplace and mantelshelf R., on which stands a quantity of old china. Round table L. C. The carpet is drugget-covered. Sofa, chairs, etc. It is late afternoon.

Miss Betsy Trotwood discovered clipping blooms at windows. She has a handkerchief tied over her cap and wears a pair of gardening gloves and an apron over her dress.

David Copperfield, dressed in rags, appears outside in garden.

MISS TROTWOOD—(*chopping the air with her knife.*)

Go away! Go along! No boys here!

(*She resumes her gardening.*)

DAVID—(*approaching and timidly touching her arm with his finger.* If you please, ma'am.

(*She starts and looks up.*)

If you please, aunt.

MISS T.—(*amazed*) Eh!

DAVID—If you please, aunt, I'm your nephew!

MISS T.—Oh, Lord!

(*Sits down flat.*)

DAVID—I am David Copperfield of Blunderstone in Suffolk, where you came on the night when

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was born and saw my dear mamma. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted and taught nothing and thrown upon myself. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.

(Breaks into a passion of weeping.)

Miss T.—Mercy on us!

(Rushes to him—carries him into room and lays him down on sofa—putting a shawl under his head—takes handkerchief from her own head and places it under his feet. She then hurriedly takes bottles from the press—pours contents from each into his mouth—then collapses into a chair.)

Miss T.—Mercy on us! *(calling)* Janet.

(Pause—she rings a hand bell) Janet, Janet!

Enter Janet.

Miss T.—Janet, go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick and say I wish to speak to him.

JANET—Yes, Miss.

Exit Janet.

(Miss Trotwood walks up and down the room in deep thought, her hands clasped behind her back. After a few turns she halts by sofa and regards David, who lies with closed eyes half asleep.)

Miss T.—*(musingly)* Poor fellow! Pretty fellow!

Enter Mr. Dick laughing and nodding his head.

(David rises.)

Miss T.—Mr. Dick, don't be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you



DAVID COPPERFIELD AND HIS AUNT 7

choose. We all know that. So don't be a fool whatever you are.

(Mr. Dick is immediately serious.)

Miss T.—Mr. Dick, you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory because you and I know better.

Mr. D.—*(rather vacantly)* David Copperfield. *David* Copperfield—Yes, to be sure—David Copperfield.

Miss T.—Well, this is his boy—his son.

Mr. D.—His son—David's son? Indeed?

Miss T.—Yes, and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah! his sister, Betsy Trotwood, would never have run away.

Mr. D.—Oh! you think she wouldn't have run away.

Miss T.—Bless and save the man—how he talks! Don't I know she wouldn't? She would have lived with her godmother, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where in the world would his sister, Betsy Trotwood, have run away to?

Mr. D.—Nowhere!

Miss T.—Well then, how can you pretend to be wool-gathering, Dick, when your wits are as sharp as a surgeon's lancet? *(Rubbing her nose perplexedly)* Whatever possessed that poor Baby, this child's unfortunate mother, that she must get married again, I can't conceive.

Mr. D.—Perhaps she fell in love with her second husband.

Miss T.—Fell in love! What do you mean? What business had she to do that?

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Mr. D.—(*simpering*) Perhaps she did it for pleasure.

Miss T.—Pleasure indeed! A mighty pleasure for the poor Baby to fix her simple faith upon any dog of a fellow, certain to allure her some way or other. She had had one husband and she had got a baby—what more did she want?

(*Mr. Dick shakes his head.*)

Miss T.—She couldn't even have a baby like anyone else. Where was this child's sister, Betsy Trotwood? Not forthcoming! Don't tell me. (*Sounds of laughter, shouts and cracking of whips heard outside.*)

Miss T.—Janet—donkeys.

Enter Janet. Miss Trotwood hastily seizes a stick from behind door, Janet takes another and Exeunt hurriedly through window. Sound of scuffling heard. Miss Trotwood angrily protesting at donkeys being ridden across her green.

Mr. D. (*after regarding David very intently for a few moments*) You have been to school?

DAVID—Yes, sir, for a short time.

Mr. D.—Do you recollect the date when King Charles the first had his head cut off? (*Takes out pencil and notebook.*)

DAVID—I believe it happened in 1649, sir.

Mr. D.—(*dubiously*) Well, so the books say, but I don't see how that can be.

Because, if it was so long ago, how could people about him have made that mistake of putting some of the trouble out of his head, after it was taken off, and putting it into mine? (*running his hand through his hair*)

It's very strange that I never can get that quite right. (*Cheering up*) But no matter—no matter—there's time enough. Look here! (*He crosses room and fetches a large kite, made of closely written manuscript, which has been standing against wall, behind window-curtain.*)

Mr. D.—What do you think of that for a kite?

DAVID—It's beautiful!

Mr. D.—I made it. Sometime we'll go and fly it, you and I. Do you see this? (*pointing to writing.*)

DAVID—Yes, sir.

Mr. D.—There's plenty of string, and when it flies high it takes the facts a long way. That's my manner of diffusing them. I don't know where they may come down. It's according to circumstances and the wind and so forth, but I take my chance of that.

Enter Miss Trotwood, ruffled but victorious, followed by Janet.

Miss T.—Now, Mr. Dick, to resume. You see young David Copperfield here, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?

Mr. D.—(*feebly scratching his head*) What shall you do with him? Oh, do with him!

Miss T.—Yes, come, I want some very sound advice.

Mr. D.—(*looking vacantly at David*) Well, if I was you (*suddenly inspired with an idea*) I should wash him.

Miss T.—(*turning triumphantly to Janet*) Janet, Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II. *The same.*

Two days later. Early evening.

Miss Trotwood discovered seated in deep thought. Enter David attired in a pair of Mr. Dick's trousers, a shirt also belonging to him, and swathed in a large shawl.

Miss T.—Hallo!

(David looks at her.)

Miss T.—I have written to him.

DAVID—To whom, aunt?

Miss T.—To your father-in-law—to Mr. Murdstone.

I sent him a letter that I'll trouble him to attend to, or he and I will fall out. He'll probably be here some time to-day.

DAVID—*(alarmed)* Does he know that I am here, aunt?

Miss T.—I have told him.

DAVID *(faltering)* Shall I be given up to him?

Miss T.—I don't know; we shall see.

DAVID—Oh, I can't think what I shall do if I have to be given back to Mr. Murdstone.

Miss T.—I don't know anything at all about it. I can't say, I'm sure. We shall see. Well, child, what do you think of Mr. Dick? *(After a short pause)* Come, your sister—Betsy Trotwood—would have told me what

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she thought of anyone directly, so be as like your sister as you can, and speak out.

DAVID—(*hesitating*) Is he—is Mr. Dick—I ask because I don't know, aunt—is he at all out of his mind, then?

Miss T.—(*emphatically*) Not a morsel.

DAVID—Oh, indeed.

Miss T.—(*decisively*) If there is anything in the world that Mr. Dick is not, it's that.

DAVID—(*timidly*) Oh!

Miss T.—(*seating herself and taking some needlework from a work-basket*) He has been called mad, and nice people they were who had the audacity to call him mad. If it hadn't been for me, his own brother would have shut him up for life, although he had been left to his particular care by their deceased father, who thought him almost a natural. And a wise man he must have been—mad himself, no doubt. So I stepped in and made him an offer. I said: Your brother's sane, a good deal more sane than you are. Let him have his little income and come and live with me, I am ready to take care of him, and shall not ill-treat him as some people have done. After a good deal of squabbling I got him, and he has been here ever since. He is the most friendly and amenable creature in existence. He had a favourite sister, a good creature and very kind to him. But she did what they all do, took a husband who made her

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wretched. It had such an effect upon the mind of Mr. Dick (that's not madness, I hope) that it threw him into a fever. That was before he came to me. Has he said anything to you about King Charles the First, child?

DAVID—Yes, aunt.

Miss T.—(*vexed, rubbing her nose*) Ah! that's his allegorical way of expressing it. He connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation naturally, and that's the figure or the simile or whatever it's called, that he chooses to use, and why shouldn't he, if he thinks proper?

DAVID—Certainly, aunt.

Miss T.—It's not a businesslike way of speaking, nor a worldly way, I am aware of that; and that's why I insist upon it there shan't be a word about it in his Memorial.

DAVID—Is it a Memorial about his own history that he is writing, aunt?

Miss T.—Yes, child. He is memorialising the Lord Chancellor or the Lord Somebody or other—one of those people at all events who are paid to be memorialised—about his affairs. I suppose it will go in one of these days. He hasn't been able to show it up yet, without that mode of expressing himself, but it don't signify; it keeps him employed. I say again, nobody knows what that man's mind is, except myself. If he likes to fly a kite sometimes, what of that? Franklin used to fly a kite. He was a Quaker or something of that



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sort, if I am not mistaken, and a Quaker flying a kite is a much more ridiculous object than anybody else.

(Sounds of shouts and donkey's hoofs heard.)

Miss Trotwood starts up, crosses to window, goes into garden and stands there, shaking her fist.)

Miss T.—Get along with you. How dare you trespass! Go along, you bold-faced thing.

DAVID—*(who has risen and is looking out of window)*
Oh, aunt, aunt, it's Mr. Murdstone and his sister.

Miss T.—*(still gesticulating)* I don't care who it is. I won't be trespassed upon. Janet, go and turn the donkey round. Lead him off.

DAVID—*(trembling)* Shall I go away, aunt?

Miss T.—No, sir, certainly not.

(She pushes him into a corner and fences him in with chair.)

Enter Janet.

JANET—Mr. and Miss Murdstone.

Enter Mr. and Miss Murdstone.

Miss Trotwood bows stiffly. They do likewise.

Enter Mr. Dick.

He stands near door biting his forefinger, looking rather foolish.

Miss T.—I was not aware at first to whom I had the pleasure of objecting. But I don't allow anybody to ride over that piece of turf. I make no exceptions.

Miss M.—Your regulation is rather awkward to strangers.

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Miss T.—Is it?

Mr. M.—Miss Trotwood?

Miss T.—I beg your pardon. Will you be seated?
(*they sit*) You are Mr. Murdstone, who married the widow of my late nephew, David Copperfield, of Blunderstone Rookery, though why Rookery, I don't know.

Mr. M.—I am.

Miss T.—(*signifying Mr. Dick*) This is Mr. Dick, an old and valued friend upon whose judgment I rely.

Mr. M.—Miss Trotwood, despite the inconvenience of the journey, I have come here in person. This unhappy boy who has run away from his friends and occupation—

Miss M.—And whose appearance is perfectly scandalous and disgraceful.

Mr. M.—Jane Murdstone, have the goodness not to interrupt me. This unhappy boy, Miss Trotwood, has been the occasion of much domestic trouble and uneasiness, both during the life-time of my late dear wife and since. He has a sullen, rebellious spirit, a violent temper, and an intractable disposition. Both my sister and myself have endeavoured to correct his vices, but ineffectually.

Miss M.—It can hardly be necessary for me to confirm anything stated by my brother, but I beg to observe, that, of all boys in the world, I believe this is the worst boy.

Miss T.—Strong!

Miss M.—But not at all too strong for the facts.



MR. MURDSTONE

[face p. 14

Miss T.—Ha! Well, sir?

Mr. M.—I place this boy under the eye of a friend of mine, in a respectable business; that does not please him; he runs away from it and makes himself a common vagabond about the country, and comes here in rags to appeal to you, Miss Trotwood. I wish to set before you honourably, the exact consequences—so far as they're within my knowledge—of your abetting him in this appeal.

Miss T.—But about the respectable business first. If he had been your own boy, you would have put him to it, just the same, I suppose?

Miss M.—If he had been my brother's own boy, his character, I trust, would have been altogether different.

Miss T.—Or if the poor child, his mother, had been alive, he would still have gone into the respectable business, would he?

Mr. M.—I believe that Clara would have disputed nothing which myself and my sister, Jane Murdstone, were agreed was for the best.

Miss T.—Humph! Unfortunate baby. The poor child's annuity died with her?

Mr. M.—(*assenting*) Died with her.

Miss T.—And there was no settlement of the little property, the house and garden, the what's it's name Rookery, without any rooks in it—upon her boy?

Mr. M.—It had been left to her unconditionally by her first husband.

Miss T.—(*impatiently*) Good Lord, man, there's no

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occasion to say that. I think I see David Copperfield looking forward to any condition of any sort or kind. Of course it was left to her unconditionally. But when she married again, when she took the disastrous step of marrying you, in short, to be plain, did no one put in a word for the boy at that time?

Mr. M.—My late wife loved her second husband, ma'am, and trusted implicitly to him.

Miss T.—Your late wife, sir, was a most unworldly, most unhappy, most unfortunate baby. That's what she was. And now, what have you got to say next?

Mr. M.—Merely this, Miss Trotwood. I am here to take David back unconditionally, to deal with him as I think right, and to dispose of him as I think proper. I am not here to make any promise, or to give any pledge. I cannot trifle or be trifled with. I am here, for the first and last time, to take him away. Is he ready to go? If he is not—and your manner, Miss Trotwood, which I must say does not seem intended to propitiate, induces me to think it possible you may have some idea of abetting him in his running away—if he is not, I say, on any pretence, it is indifferent to me what,—my doors are shut against him henceforth, and yours, I take it, are open.

Miss T.—What does the boy say? Are you ready to go, David?

DAVID—(*throwing himself on his knees before his aunt*) No, no, don't make me go away with

DAVID COPPERFIELD AND HIS AUNT 17

him. They've both hated me and have been so cruel. They made my dear mamma so unhappy about me—oh, aunt, I was more miserable with them than I ever thought anyone could be. Oh, aunt, aunt, I beg and pray you not to send me away, but let me stay with you. (*Breaks down and sobs*).

Miss T.—(*turning to Mr. Dick, who immediately pulls himself up and looks very attentive*) Mr. Dick, what shall I do with this child?

Mr. DICK—(*abruptly, after hesitating and considering*) Have him measured for a suit of clothes.

Miss T.—(*triumphantly*) Mr. Dick—give me your hand—your commonsense is invaluable. (*Shakes his hand warmly, then pulls David to her and turns toward Mr. Murdstone*).

Miss T.—You can go when you like. I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's all you say he is, I can at least do as much for him as you have done. But I don't believe a word of it.

Mr. M.—(*rising*) Miss Trotwood, if you were a gentleman—

Miss T.—Bah! Stuff and nonsense! Don't talk to me.

Miss M.—(*rising*) How exquisitely polite! Overpowering, really.

Miss T.—(*disregarding Miss Murdstone absolutely*) Do you think I don't know what a woeful day it was for that poor, unhappy, misdirected baby when you first came in her way—smirking and making great eyes, I'll be bound, as if you couldn't say boh to a goose.

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Miss M.—I never heard anything so elegant.

Miss T.—Do you think I can't understand as well as if I had seen you, now that I do see and hear you—which I tell you candidly, is anything but a pleasure to me. Oh, yes, bless us! who so smooth and silky as Mr. Murdstone at first! The poor, benighted innocent had never seen such a man. He was made of sweetness. He worshipped her. He doted on her boy. He was to be another father to him, and they were all to live together in a garden of roses, weren't they? Ugh! Get along with you, do!

Miss M.—(*in an agony at being unable to turn the course of Miss Trotwood's address towards herself*) This is either insanity or intoxication, and my suspicion is that it's intoxication.

Miss T.—(*still utterly disregarding Miss Murdstone*) Mr. Murdstone, you were a tyrant to the simple baby, and you broke her heart. There is the truth for your comfort, however you like it. And you and your instruments may make the most of it.

Miss M.—Allow me to enquire, Miss Trotwood, whom you are pleased to call, in a choice of words in which I am not experienced, my brother's instruments?

Miss T.—(*still stone-deaf to her*) It was clear enough that the poor, soft little thing would marry somebody at some time or other. But I did hope it wouldn't have turned out as bad as it has. That was the time, Mr. Murdstone,



MR. DICK

[face p. 18

when she gave birth to her boy here, to the poor child you tormented her through afterwards, which is a disagreeable remembrance, and makes the sight of him odious now. Ah! you needn't wince. I know it's true without that. And now good-day, sir, and good-bye. (*Turning suddenly on Miss Murdstone.*) And good-day to you, too, ma'am. Let me see you ride a donkey over my green again, and as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders, I'll knock your bonnet off and tread upon it. Janet! the door.

(*Miss Murdstone, thunderstruck by the attack, finds no words in which to reply. After a pause she passes her arm through her brother's. Enter Janet—she holds open door. Exeunt Mr. and Miss Murdstone. Janet follows them. A moment's silence, then David throws himself into Miss Trotwood's arms and kisses her.*)

DAVID—Oh, thank you, dear aunt, thank you.

(*He shakes hands with Mr. Dick, who hails the happy close of the proceedings with repeated bursts of laughter.*)

Miss T.—Mr. Dick, you'll consider yourself guardian, jointly with me, of this child.

Mr. DICK—I shall be delighted to be the guardian of David's son.

Miss T.—Very good—that's settled. And now, Mr. Dick, I am going to ask you another question. Look at this child!

Mr. DICK—David's son?

Miss T.—Exactly so. What would you do with him.

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Mr. DICK—Do with David's son?

Miss T.—Ay! with David's son.

Mr. DICK—Oh! Yes—Do with—I should—er—put him to bed.

Miss T.—(*with complacent triumph*) David, Mr. Dick sets us all right. The bed is ready, so we'll take you up.

CURTAIN.

THE MICAWBERS DINE WITH DAVID

FROM

DAVID COPPERFIELD

CHARACTERS

DAVID COPPERFIELD.

At this time between nineteen and twenty years of age.

MR. WILKINS MICAWBER.

A stoutish, middle-aged man, with a very bald and very shiny head. He is dressed in a surtout, black tights and shoes, and wears an immense shirt collar. A quizzing glass hangs outside his coat.

MRS. MICAWBER.

A thin, faded middle-aged lady.

LITTIMER—*A Man-servant.*

Very respectable in appearance, quiet in manner, observant, taciturn, soft-footed and exceedingly deferential.

TOMMY TRADDLES.

A little older than David, not handsome, but has a bright expressive face. He has a trick of constantly running his fingers through his hair, which keeps it perpetually standing on end.

MRS. CRUPP—*A Landlady.*

A stout woman dressed in a nankeen gown with a flounce of flannel petticoat showing below it,

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JENNY—*A Maid-servant.*

Untidy appearance, slouching gait, and suffers from a chronic cold in the head.

Period : About 1836.

SCENE I.

David Copperfield's rooms in Buckingham St., Adelphi. Windows back. Door R. leading to stairs. Door L. leading to inner room. Fireplace in which bright fire is burning—L. Table C. partially laid for four. Chairs, etc. A kettle is standing upon the hob.

David discovered reading. Enter Jenny. She walks with a slouching gait and carries a pile of plates, which in default of any better place she deposits upon the floor, then proceeds to finish laying the cloth, which she does to the accompaniment of loud and frequent sniffs, much to David's annoyance. She constantly peers at him and as constantly imagines herself detected. After a more than usually noisy sniff, David starts up irritably and rings bell loudly. This so startles Jenny that she drops a plate she is holding. It falls upon those still remaining on the floor and completely shatters both them and itself.

DAVID—Will you kindly go down stairs at once and ask Mrs. Crupp to step up here?

JENNY—(with loud sniff) I can 'ear 'er a-comin', sir.

(*She shuffles out. David picks up broken plates and angrily throws them into paper basket.*)

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Enter Mrs. Crupp breathless : she sinks into a chair near the door.

DAVID—Mrs. Crupp, when I agreed to engaging that young person for this evening, I thought I had stipulated she was to remain outside on the landing, where we should not hear her sniffing, and where she could not break the plates. Cannot you see to the laying of the table?

Mrs. C.—(*with dignified sense of injury*) No! no, sir! You will not ask me sich a thing, for you are better acquainted with me than to suppose me capable of doing what I cannot do with ampial satisfaction to my own feelings.

(David shrugs his shoulders and crosses to table and completes laying it himself.

Mrs. Crupp becomes breathless and lays hand upon her bosom.)

DAVID—(*anxiously*) Are you ill, Mrs. Crupp?

Mrs. C.—I am a bit low, Mr. Copperfull, sir; perhaps you could oblige me with a little tinxture of cardamans mixed with rhubarb and flavoured with essence of cloves. That, Mr. Copperfull, sir, is the best remedy for my complaint, but if you don't 'appen to 'ave sich a thing by you, sir, a little drop of brandy, though not so palatable to myself, is the next best cure.

(David sighs, goes to cupboard and takes out bottle of brandy and pours some into glass.)

Mrs. C.—(*cheering up wonderfully*) Mr. Copperfull, sir, I thank you (*she drinks*), but you've not been yourself lately, sir; I can't a-bear to see you so, sir. I'm a mother myself.



MRS. CRUPP

[face p. 26

DAVID—(*uncomfortably*) Really, Mrs. Crupp?

Mrs. C.—(*smiling benignly*) Come, sir, excuse me. I know what it is. There's a lady in the case, Mr. Copperfull.

DAVID—Mrs. Crupp.

Mrs. C.—(*sipping and nodding encouragement*) Keep a good heart, sir. Never say die, sir. If she don't smile upon you, there's a-many as will. You are a young gentleman to be smiled upon, Mr. Copperfull, and must learn your value.

DAVID—What makes you suppose there's a lady in the case, Mrs. Crupp?

Mrs. C.—Mr. Copperfull, I'm a mother myself. (*Fortifies herself again*) When the present set were took for you by your dear aunt, sir, my remark were, I had now found summun I could care for! Thank 'ev'in were the expression, 'I have now found summun I can care for!' You don't eat enough, sir, nor yet drink.

DAVID—Is that what you found your supposition on, Mrs. Crupp?

Mrs. C.—Sir, I've laundressed other young gentlemen besides yourself. A young gentleman may be over-careful of himself, or he may be under-careful of himself. He may brush his hair too regular or too unregular. He may wear boots too large for him, or much too small. But let him go to which extreme he may, sir, there's a young lady in both of 'em.
(*She shakes her head in a determined manner and takes another sip.*)

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It was but the gentleman which died here before yourself, that fell in love—with a barmaid—and had his waistcoats took in directly, though much swelled by drinking.

DAVID—Mrs. Crupp, I must beg you not to connect the young lady in my case with a barmaid, or anything of that sort, if you please.

Mrs. C.—Mr. Copperfull, I'm a mother myself, and not likely. I ask your pardon, sir, if I intrude. I should never wish to intrude where I were not welcome. But you are a young gentleman, Mr. Copperfull, and my advice to you is, to cheer up, sir, to keep a good heart, and to know your own value. If you was to take to skittles, now, which is healthy, you might find it divert your mind, and do you good.

(She again presses her hand upon her bosom and finishes the brandy. Sound of voices heard on stairs.)

DAVID—Thank you, Mrs. Crupp—but I think I hear my friends now.

Mrs. C.—*(curtseying majestically)* Thank you, sir.

Enter Jenny.

JENNY—'Ere's the party, sir.

(Sniffs and turns to exit, colliding with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber and Mr. Thomas Traddles as they enter.)

DAVID—My dear Mrs. Micawber, I'm delighted to see you.

Mrs. M.—*(who carries a large whitey brown paper parcel)* Mr. Copperfield, the pleasure is mine.



Mr. M.—(*warmly shaking David by the hand*) My dear Copperfield, this is luxurious. This is a way of life which reminds me of the period when I was myself in a state of celibacy, and Mrs. Micawber had not yet been solicited to plight her faith at the Hymeneal altar.

Mrs. M.—(*archly*) He means solicited by him, Mr. Copperfield. He cannot answer for others.

Mr. M.—(*with sudden seriousness*) My dear, I have no desire to answer for others. I am too well aware that when, in the inscrutable decrees of Fate, you were reserved for me, it is possible you may have been reserved for one, destined, after a protracted struggle, at length to fall a victim to pecuniary involvements of a complicated nature. I understand your allusion, my love. I regret it but I can bear it.

Mrs. M.—(*on the verge of tears*) Micawber! Have I deserved this? I, who never have deserted, who never will desert you, Micawber.

Mr. M.—(*much affected*) My love, you will forgive, and our old and tried friend Copperfield will, I am sure, forgive the momentary laceration of a wounded spirit, made sensitive by a recent collision with the Minion of Power—in other words, with a ribald Turncock attached to the waterworks—and will pity, not condemn, its excesses.

TRADDLES—(*aside to David*) He means he had his water supply cut off this afternoon.

DAVID—Mrs. Micawber, perhaps you would like to take your things off.

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Mrs C.—(*coming forward*) If the lady will come with me, Mr. Copperfull, sir, I'll take her to your room, where I've lit the fire with my own 'ands, sir, and perwided two wax candles, a paper of mixed pins and a pincushion to assist the lady in her toilette. This way, mum.

Exit Mrs. Crupp into inner room, followed by Mrs. Micawber. Mrs. Crupp enters again almost immediately and exit Door R.

DAVID—I'm relying on you to make a bowl of punch, Mr. Micawber. There are the lemons!

Mr. M.—With all the pleasure in the world, my dear Copperfield.

(Mr. Micawber instantly cheers up and crosses to small side table indicated by David, upon which is set a bowl, some lemons, sugar, a bottle of rum and a jug.)

Mr. M.—(*cutting up lemons*) My dear Traddles, will you draw me some boiling water?

TRADDLES—Certainly!

(He takes jug and fills from kettle at fireplace.)

Mr. M.—(*continuing his operations*) Ah! Copperfield, I need hardly tell you that to have beneath our roof, under existing circumstances, a mind like that which gleams—if I may be allowed to use the expression—which gleams in your friend, Traddles, is an unspeakable comfort. With a washerwoman who exposes hardbake for sale in her parlour-window, dwelling next door, and a Bow-Street officer residing over the way, you may imagine that his society is a source of consolation to myself and to Mrs. Micawber.



MR. MICAWBER

[face p. 30]

DAVID—I can well believe it, Mr. Micawber, but now as I think I hear Mrs. Micawber coming, I will ring for dinner. (*Does so.*)

Enter Mrs. Micawber who has now discarded her bonnet and assumed a white cap.

Mrs. M.—Ah! Mr. Copperfield, this is all so very delightful that I feel gayer than the lark. Little did I think who it was I was about to meet again when last week Micawber called to me over the bannister that there was a gentleman in Mr. Traddles' apartment he wished to present me to.

Mr. M.—Yes, my dear Traddles, I too was indeed amazed to find you acquainted with Copperfield, the friend of my youth, the companion of earlier days.

TRADDLES—Believe me, Mr. Micawber, I am very happy to have been the instrument that brought about so happy a re-union.

Enter Jenny with a dish of fried soles, which she deposits on table; sniffs and exit.

DAVID—Mrs. Micawber, if Mr. Micawber has finished making the punch, will you allow me the pleasure?

(She takes David's arm and he conducts her to table. Mr. Micawber places the jug of steaming punch upon the hob. They all seat themselves. David serves the soles.)

Mrs. M.—*(eating)* I never thought, before I was married, when I lived with papa and mama, that I should ever find it necessary to take a lodger. But Mr. Micawber being in difficulties

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all considerations of private feelings must give way.

DAVID—Yes, certainly.

Mrs. M.—Mr. Micawber's difficulties are almost overwhelming just at present (*Mr. Micawber helps himself to wine*), and whether it is possible to bring him through them, I don't know. When I lived at home with papa and mama, I really should hardly have understood what the word meant, in the sense in which I now employ it, but *experientia* does it, as papa used to say.

TRADDLES—Quite so.

Enter Jenny carrying pigeon pie. She changes the plates, sniffing meanwhile. Exit.

DAVID—(*looking doubtfully at pie*) Now, do let me give you some pigeon-pie.

Mrs. M.—Thank you, Mr. Copperfield, you may!

DAVID—(*handing her some.*) Pray continue what you were saying, Mrs. Micawber.

(He serves the others. They endeavour to find something to eat but without much success.)

Mrs. M.—Well, I was about to say that if Mr. Micawber's creditors *will not* give him time, they must take the consequences, and the sooner they bring it to an issue the better. Blood cannot be obtained from a stone, neither can anything on account be obtained at present (not to mention law expenses) from Mr. Micawber.

(Loud crash heard outside.)

DAVID—(*hurriedly*) I fear none of you have much to eat. I'm afraid this pie is a failure.

Mr. M.—No, no, my dear Copperfield, not so bad as that, although I must confess that, phrenologically speaking, the crust is like a disappointing head, all lumps and bumps with nothing particular underneath. In short, it is a delusive pie.

Enter Jenny with dish of roast mutton, which she places before David.

DAVID—(*closely inspecting the joint*) May I ask what this gritty substance is which covers the meat?

JENNY—(*changing plates*) It's ashes from the kitchen grate. Mrs. Crupp was took ill, and let it fall in 'em.

DAVID—Ill! What is the matter then?

JENNY—Spazzums! (*sniffs and exit carrying plates.*)

DAVID—Dear me! It's most unfortunate!

TRADDLES—Oh! it's of no consequence at all, my dear fellow!

DAVID—(*calling*) Jenny! Jenny!

JENNY—(*returning*) Did yer call, sir?

DAVID—Yes, where is the gravy?

JENNY—I dropped it on the stairs a-comin' up, sir.

Exit. Crash of breaking crockery heard as she drops the plates on landing.

Mr. M.—A most remarkable young woman that servant of yours, my dear Copperfield!

DAVID—(*carving*) This mutton is so very red within and so very pale without, that I fear we cannot possibly eat it. I can't tell you, Mr. Micawber, how unhappy I am my banquet is such a failure.

Mr. M.—My dear friend Copperfield, accidents will

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occur in the best-regulated families, and in families not regulated by that pervading influence which sanctifies while it enhances the—a—I would say, in short, by the influence of woman, in the lofty character of wife, they may be expected with confidence. If you will allow me to take the liberty of remarking that there are few comestibles better, in their way, than a Devil, and that I believe, with a little division of labour, we could accomplish a good one, if the young person in attendance could produce a gridiron, I would put it to you that this little misfortune may be easily repaired.

DAVID—(*brightening*) We can have one in a twinkling. There's a gridiron just outside in the pantry that's used to cook my morning rasher on. (*Calls*) Jenny! Jenny!

Enter Jenny.

JENNY—Yees, sir!

DAVID—Fetch me the gridiron.

Mr. M.—(*to David*) And a saucepan, if possible.

DAVID—And the saucepan.

Exit Jenny.

DAVID—Now let us carry out Mr. Micawber's idea into effect.

Mr. M.—(*turning up his cuffs*) Well, then, my dear Traddles, you shall cut up the meat into slices while I will cover them with pepper, salt, mustard and cayenne.

Enter Jenny with gridiron and saucepan, which she hands to Mr. Micawber, sniffs and exit.



MRS. MICAWBER

[face p. 34

THE MICAWBERS DINE WITH DAVID 35

(N.B.—*This scene must be played merrily and briskly.*)

Mr. M.—Now, my dear Copperfield, you shall attend to the culinary department. Take these to begin with. (*Hands him prepared slices.*) And you, my love (*to Mrs. Micawber*), heat a little of the mushroom ketchup that I see upon the table.

(*He continues preparing more slices as Traddles carves them. Mrs. Micawber and David cross to the fire and commence the cooking.*)

Mrs. M.—Really, this is quite delightful, and positively reminds me of the many little suppers I used to toss up for my dear papa in the days when, before I had met Mr. Micawber, I used to dwell in the bosom of my family.

Mr. M.—My love, on such a pleasant occasion as this, I beg that you will not mention your family.

Mrs. M.—My dear!

Mr. M.—I do not wish to make any remarks of an offensive character, but I am bound to admit that I consider your family are, in the aggregate Snobs; and, in detail, unmitigated Ruffians.

Mrs. M.—Ah, Micawber, they have never understood you. I pity their misfortune. (*To David, hurriedly*) Oh, Mr. Copperfield, be careful, or those slices will be overdone. Turn them with a fork, my dear Mr. Copperfield, turn them with a fork.

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TRADDLES—Upon my word, they smell most tempting. I feel hungrier than I've done for weeks.

Mr. M.—Now then, are those nearly ready for I've another batch here awaiting to be brought to a state of perfection that shall crown the feast.

Enter Littimer.

He stands respectfully, hat in hand. They all perceive him and relapse into silence. Mr. Micawber hastily conceals a fork in the bosom of his coat, leaving the handle sticking out; he hums a tune and subsides into a chair.

Mrs. Micawber puts on her brown gloves and assumes a genteel languor.

Traddles runs his greasy hands through his hair, leaves it standing bolt upright and stares uncomfortably at tablecloth.

David, still holding the gridiron, turns and regards Littimer.

DAVID—What's the matter.

LITTIMER—I beg your pardon, sir, I was directed to come in. Is my master, Mr. Steerforth, not here?

DAVID—No!

LITTIMER—Have you not seen him, sir?

DAVID—No! Did he tell you you would find him here?

LITTIMER—Not exactly so, sir. But I should think he might be here to-morrow as he is not here to-day, but I beg, sir, that you will be seated and allow me to do this!

(He crosses and takes gridiron from David, who goes to table and seats himself, looking un-

comfortable. There is a complete silence while Littimer takes mutton off gridiron, places it on dish, and gravely hands it round.)

LITTIMER—Can I do anything more, sir?

DAVID—No, thank you, Littimer.

(Littimer moves softly towards door.)

DAVID—Oh! Littimer.

LITTIMER—Sir!

DAVID—Will you take any dinner yourself?

LITTIMER—No, thank you, sir. Good-night, sir.

(He includes everybody in a respectful bow and exit.)

Pause. Then everybody gives sigh of relief.)

Mr. M.—A most respectable fellow that, and a thoroughly admirable servant! But punch, my dear Copperfield, like time and tide waits for no man. *(Crosses to hob and fetches it)* My love! *(to Mrs. Micawber)* will you give me your opinion?

Mrs. M.—*(tasting)* It is excellent.

Mr. M.—Then I will drink, if my friend Copperfield will permit me to take that social liberty, to the days when my friend Copperfield and myself were younger and fought our way in the world side by side. I may say of myself and Copperfield, in words we have sung together before now, that

“We twa hae run about the braes
And pu’d the gowans fine.”

—in a figurative point of view—on several occasions. I am not exactly aware what gowans may be, but I have no doubt that

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Copperfield and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them, if it had been feasible.

(He takes a pull at his punch.)

Mr. M.—And now, my dear Copperfield and my love, I will ask you to drink to my friend, Traddles, who possesses a character, the steady virtues of which I, Wilkins Micawber, can lay no claim to, but which, thank Heaven, I can admire. I believe I am right in saying that there is a young lady, whom my friend, Traddles, has honoured with his affection, and who honours and blesses him with her affection. I pledge both her and my friend, Traddles.

(They drink.)

TRADDLES—*(rising)* I am sure I am very much obliged to you all. Yes, I am engaged. and I do assure you she's the dearest girl in the world.

DAVID—*(aside)* Engaged! Oh! Dora!

TRADDLES—She's a curate's daughter, one of ten. I daresay ours is likely to be a long engagement, but our motto is "Wait and hope." We always say that, and she would wait till she was sixty, any age you can mention, for me. Yes, I do assure you she's the dearest girl in the world. *(He sits down amid great applause.)*

Mr. M.—Ahem! my dear, *(to Mrs. Micawber)* another glass?

Mrs M.—Well, my love, it must be a very little one.

Mr. M.—No, no, it must be a full one, for I have another toast to propose. *(He fills her glass.)*



(R)

TOMMY TRADDLES

(face p. 33

Nothing but the serious assurance of my friend, Copperfield, will deprive me of the impression that my friend, Copperfield, is, in short, loved and beloved.

(David looking very uncomfortable attempts to deny the impeachment.)

Mr. M.—Come, come, my dear Copperfield, I'll take no denial.

TRADDLES—Own up, Copperfield, own up.

DAVID—*(hesitating and stammering)* Well! I will give you D.

Mr. M.—Bravo, I am overjoyed to hear it. Here's to Miss D! *(drinks)*

Mrs. M.—Hear! hear! My dear Mr. Copperfield, I am delighted.

TRADDLES—Does Miss D live in London?

DAVID—Yes.

TRADDLES—Hah! mine lives in Devonshire.

(He shakes his head sadly)

Mrs. M.—*(sipping her punch)* As we are quite confidential here, Mr. Copperfield, Mr. Traddles being a part of our domesticity, I should much like to have your opinion of Mr. Micawber's prospects. For corn, his present avocation, as I have repeatedly said to Mr. Micawber, may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative. Commission to the extent of two-and-ninepence in a fortnight cannot, however limited our ideas, be considered remunerative.

Mr. M.—In short, my dear Copperfield, it does not pay.

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Mrs. M.—Precisely; and the fact is, my dear Mr. Copperfield, that we cannot live without something widely different from existing circumstances shortly turning up. Now, I am convinced myself, and this I have pointed out to Mr. Micawber several times of late, that things cannot be expected to turn up of themselves. We must, in a measure, assist them to turn up. Now, here is Mr. Micawber, with a variety of qualifications—with great talent—

Mr. M.—Really, my love.

Mrs. M.—Pray, my dear, allow me to conclude, I have recently consulted with the members of my family on the course which it is most expedient for Mr. Micawber to take—for I maintain that he must take some course, Mr. Copperfield. It is clear that a family of six, not including a domestic, cannot live upon air.

DAVID—Certainly.

Mrs. M.—Very well. The opinion of my family is, that Mr. Micawber should immediately turn his attention to coals.

DAVID—To what?

Mrs. M.—To the coal trade. Mr. Micawber is induced to think, upon inquiry, that there may be an opening for a man of talent in the Medway Coal Trade. Therefore, as Mr. Micawber very properly says, the first step to be taken clearly is, to go and see the Medway, which we intend to do to-morrow. I say we, Mr. Copperfield, for I never will desert Mr. Micawber. (*She rises.*) And now, my dear Mr. Copperfield, as the

hour is late, I fear we must be contemplating a return to Camden Town. *Exit into inner room.*

Mr. M.—(*helping himself to more punch*) In the event, my dear Copperfield, of something satisfactory turning up, out of to-morrow's trip, my first step will be to quit the somewhat confined area of Camden Town—in short, I shall move. I have long had my eye upon a certain house near Oxford Street, fronting Hyde Park, but which, however, I cannot hope to attain immediately. I shall therefore, in the interval, content myself with an upper part, over some respectable place of business—say in Piccadilly—which would be a cheerful situation for Mrs. Micawber, and where, I daresay, by making a few judicious alterations, such as throwing out a bow-window, or by carrying the roof up another storey, we shall manage to live comfortably and reputably for a few years. And let me add, my dear Copperfield, that whatever may be reserved for me in the future, or wherever my abode may be, there will always be a knife and fork for you, and a room for my friend Traddles.

Enter Mrs. Micawber attired in her cloak and bonnet.

Mrs. M.—Good-night, Mr. Copperfield, good-night, (*in a low tone.*) Is D dark or fair? (*David laughs.*)

Mr. M.—Come, my love. My dear Traddles, will you have the goodness to conduct Mrs. Micawber down stairs?

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TRADDLES—With pleasure.

(He shakes hands with David. Exeunt Traddles and Mrs. Micawber.)

Mr. M.—*(taking a letter from his breast pocket and in a sad, solemn tone of voice)* Copperfield, my dear friend, read this at your leisure. Good-night, good-night.

(Gives him letter and exit.

David stands looking after him for a moment, then at letter, which he tears open.)

DAVID.—*(reading)* “Sir—for I dare not say my dear Copperfield—it is expedient that I should inform you that the undersigned is Crushed. Some flickering efforts to spare you the premature knowledge of his calamitous position, you may observe in him this day ; but hope has sunk beneath the horizon, and the undersigned is Crushed. The present communication is penned within the personal range (I cannot call it society) of an individual, in a state closely bordering on intoxication, employed by a broker. That individual is in legal possession of the premises, under a distress for rent. After premising thus much, it would be a work of supererogation to add, that dust and ashes are for ever scattered

“ On

“ The

“ Head

“ Of

“ Wilkins Micawber.”

CURTAIN.

JINGLE'S WOOING OF THE SPINSTER
AUNT

FROM THE

PICKWICK PAPERS

IN TWO SCENES

CHARACTERS

Mr. ALFRED JINGLE.

A tall, thin man. He is dressed in a green coat which has evidently been made for a much shorter man. The soiled and faded sleeves scarcely reach to his wrists. He wears coat closely buttoned up to chin and an old stock ornaments his neck. His trousers are rather black and shiny, and bespeak long service.

Mr. TRACY TUPMAN.

Rather elderly and fat. Carefully groomed and well dressed. Carries right arm in sling.

Mr. PICKWICK.

Rather old, stout and bald. Wears tail-coat, tight trousers and gaiters.

Mrs. WARDLE.

A very old woman. Wears silk gown and a lofty cap.

Mr. WARDLE.

A stout gentleman, about 60 years old and of very hearty appearance. Wears blue coat, bright buttons, corduroy breeches and top boots.

Mr. PERKER—*A Lawyer.*

A little dapper short man. Dressed in black with very shiny boots, white neck-cloth and

frilled shirt. Gold watch, chain, and seals depend from his fob. Carries black kid gloves.

Miss WARDLE—*The Spinster Aunt.*

A lady of doubtful age.

JOSEPH—*The Fat Boy.*

Large and red-faced. Habitually wears a very vacant expression.

Period : About 1828.

SCENE I.

*Sitting-room at Manor Farm, Dingley Dell.
Large windows at back opening into garden.
Enter from garden Mr. Tracy Tupman, and
Miss Wardle, the spinster aunt.*

Mr. T.—Miss Wardle!

(Miss Wardle trembles.)

Miss W.—Mr. Tupman!

Mr. T.—Miss Wardle, you are an angel.

Miss W.—Mr. Tupman!

Mr. T.—Nay, but I know it but too well.

Miss W.—*(playfully)* All women are angels, they say

Mr. T.—Then what can you be, or to what can I
compare you? Where was the woman ever
seen who resembled you? Where else could
I hope to find so rare a combination of
excellence and beauty? Where else could I
seek—oh—! *(Kisses her hand in ecstasy.)*

*(The Fat Boy appears in garden and stands
gazing in at them.)*

Miss W.—*(turning away her head)* Men are such
deceivers.

Mr. T.—They are—they are, but not all men. There
lives at least one being who can never change
—one being who could be content to devote
his whole existence to your happiness—who

lives but in your eyes—who breathes but in your smiles—who bears the heavy burden of life itself only for you.

Miss W.—Could such an individual be found?

Mr. T.—But he can be found. He is found, Miss Wardle—Rachael—he is here. (*Sinks upon his knees.*)

Miss W.—Mr. Tupman, rise.

Mr. T.—(*seizing her hand*) Never—Oh, Rachael! oh, Rachael, say you love me.

Miss W.—Mr. Tupman, I can hardly speak the words, but you are not wholly indifferent to me.

Mr. T.—Rachael!

(He jumps up—throws his arm round her neck and imprints many kisses upon her lips. At first she makes a show of resistance but then gives way.)

Miss W.—(*suddenly observing the Fat Boy*) Mr. Tupman, we are observed.

(They start apart. The Fat Boy continues to stare with utter vacancy of countenance.)

Mr. T.—(*firmly*) What do you want here?

FAT BOY—Tea's ready, sir.

Mr. T.—(*with searching look*) Have you just come here sir?

FAT BOY—Just!

Mr. T.—(*to Miss W.*) He knows nothing of what has happened.

Miss W.—Nothing!

(The Fat Boy chuckles. They start and look round. He resumes his vacancy of countenance.)



TRACY TUPMAN

[face p. 48

Mr. T.—(*in whisper*) He must have been fast asleep.

Miss W.—He must have been.

[*They both laugh heartily.*]

Exit Fat Boy.

Mr. T.—Rachael!

Miss W.—Tracy!

(*They embrace.*)

Miss W.—(*coily disengaging herself*) I have forgotten my flowers.

Mr. T.—Water them now. Let me help you.

Miss W.—But you will take cold in the evening air.

Mr. T.—No, no. It will do me good.

Miss W.—Come then.

Exeunt into garden.

Enter Fat Boy Door R., supporting Mrs. Wardle. They walk slowly across stage. She seats herself L. Fat Boy looks cautiously round, then places his lips close to Mrs. Wardle's ear.

FAT BOY—Missus! (*She evinces alarm*).

(*louder*) Missus!

Mrs. W.—(*trembling*) Well, Joe, I'm sure I've been a good mistress to you, Joe. You have invariably been treated very kindly. You have never had much to do, and you have always had enough to eat.

FAT BOY—(*emphatically*) I know I has!

Mrs. W.—Then what can you want me to do now.

FAT BOY—I wants to make your flesh creep.

(*Mrs. Wardle shows considerable alarm. Mr. Jingle passes across back in garden sees them and pauses to listen behind window, where he cannot be perceived by them.*)

FAT BOY—What do you think I see in this very room just here?

Mrs. W.—Bless us! What?

FAT BOY—The strange gentleman—him as had his arm hurt—a-kissin' and a-huggin'—

Mrs. W.—Who, Joe? Not one of the servants?

FAT BOY—(*shouting in her ear*) Worser than that!

Mrs. W.—Not one of my grand-d'aters!

FAT BOY—Worser than that!

Mrs. W.—Worse than that! Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing.

(*The Fat Boy looks cautiously around.*)

FAT BOY—(*roaring in her ear*) Miss Rachel!

Mrs. W.—(*shrilly*) What! Speak louder.

FAT BOY—(*still louder*) Miss Rachel!

Mrs. W.—My d'ater?

(*Fat Boy nods vigorously.*)

Mrs. W.—And she suffered him!

FAT BOY—(*grinning*) I see her a-kissin' of him agin.

Mrs. W.—(*rising—loudly lamenting*) At her time of life—without my permission—oh, dear!—oh, dear! She might have waited till I was dead. Miserable old 'ooman like me—

Exit still loudly complaining, followed by Fat Boy, who chuckles noisily.

(*Mr. Jingle peeps in—seeing room is empty enters, and stands a moment in deep thought, but perceiving Miss Wardle, who appears in garden, watering the flowers, steals noiselessly from the room.*)

Enter Miss Wardle.

She seats herself at table L. C., and takes out some knitting.

Miss W.—(*ruminating*) Dear—dear Mr. Tupman.

(She sighs and begins to work. Mr. Jingle peeps in, Door R., and coughs. Miss Wardle looks up and smiles. Mr. Jingle lays his fingers on his lips mysteriously and enters, quietly closing door after him.)

JINGLE—(*with affected earnestness*) Forgive intrusion—short acquaintance—no time for ceremony—all discovered.

Miss W.—(*astonished*) Sir!

JINGLE—(*in stage whisper*) Hush! Large boy—dumpling face—round eyes—rascal.

Miss W.—(*trying to appear composed*) I suppose you allude to Joseph, sir.

JINGLE—Yes, ma'am—damnt hat Joe—treacherous dog, Joe—told old lady—old lady furious—wild—raving—Tupman—kissing—hugging—all that sort of thing—eh, ma'am, eh?

Miss W.—Mr. Jingle, if you come here, sir, to insult me.

JINGLE—(*unabashed*) Not at all—by no means—overheard the tale—came to warn you of your danger—tender my services—prevent the hubbub. Never mind—think it an insult—leave the room. (*Turns as if to go*).

Miss W.—(*bursting into tears*) What shall I do? My brother will be furious.

JINGLE—Of course he will—outrageous.

Miss W.—Oh, Mr. Jingle, what can I say?

JINGLE—Say he dreamt it—nothing more easy—blackguard boy—lovely woman—fat boy horsewhipped—you believed—end of matter—all comfortable.

(He sighs deeply, and fixes his eyes on the spinster aunt's face, then starts melodramatically.)

Miss W.—*(plaintively)* You seem unhappy, Mr. Jingle. May I show my gratitude for your kind interference by enquiring into the cause, with a view, if possible, to its removal?

JINGLE—*(starting)* Ha! removal—remove my unhappiness, and your love bestowed upon a man who is insensible to its blessing—who even now contemplates a design upon the affections of the niece of the creature who—but no—he is my friend—I will not expose his vices. Miss Wardle, farewell.

(Applies the remnant of a handkerchief to his eyes and turns towards the door).

Miss W.—*(emphatically)* Stay, Mr. Jingle, stay! You have made an allusion to Mr. Tupman. Explain it.

JINGLE—Can I see lovely creature sacrificed at the shrine of—heartless avarice! *(Pause—then in a deep whisper)* Tupman only wants your money.

Miss W.—The wretch!

JINGLE—*(aside)* Good, she has money. *(Aloud)* More than that—he loves another.

Miss W.—Another! Who?

JINGLE—Short girl—black eyes—your niece Emily.

Miss W.—*(highly indignant—tossing her head and biting her lips)*—It can't be. I won't believe it.



JINGLE—Watch 'em.

Miss W.—I will.

JINGLE—Watch his looks.

Miss W.—I will.

JINGLE—His whispers.

Miss W.—I will.

JINGLE—He'll sit next her at table.

Miss W.—Let him.

JINGLE—He'll flatter her.

Miss W.—Let him.

JINGLE—He'll pay her every possible attention.

Miss W.—Let him.

JINGLE—He'll cut you.

Miss W.—(*screaming*) Cut me! He cut me! Will he!

JINGLE—You will convince yourself?

Miss W.—I will.

JINGLE—You'll show your spirit?

Miss W.—I will.

JINGLE—You'll not have him afterwards?

Miss W.—Never!

JINGLE—You'll take somebody else?

Miss W.—Yes.

JINGLE—You shall. Take me!

*(He falls upon his knees and takes her hand.
She looks coyly at him. He kisses her hand.)*

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

A private sitting-room at the White Hart Inn, London.

*Miss Wardle discovered seated at breakfast.
Enter Mr. Jingle carrying Special Licence in his hand.*

JINGLE—Licence—dearest of angels—licence—call you mine to-morrow.

(Squeezes her hands.)

Miss W.—The licence!

JINGLE—The licence!

“In a hurry post haste for a licence
In a hurry ding dong to come back.”

Miss W.—How you run on!

JINGLE—Run on—nothing to the hours, days, weeks, months, years when we're united; run on—they'll fly on—bolt—mizzle—steam engine—thousand horse power—nothing to it—

Miss W.—Can't—can't we be married before to-morrow morning?

JINGLE—Impossible—can't be—notice at the church to-day—ceremony come off to-morrow.

Miss W.—I am so terrified lest my brother should discover us.

JINGLE—Discover—nonsense—too much shaken by breakdown—besides extreme caution—gave up post-chaise—walked or took a hackney



THE SPINSTER AUNT

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coach—came to the Borough—last place in the world that he'd look in—ha ha—capital notion that—very.

(The clock strikes the half hour.)

JINGLE—Half-past nine—just time—off at once.

Miss W.—*(coquettishly)* Time for what?

JINGLE—Give notice at the church. *(Puts on hat.)*

Miss W.—Don't be long?

JINGLE—Long away from you? Cruel charmer.

(Imprints a kiss upon her lips.)

Miss W.—*(aside)*—Dear man.

JINGLE—*(aside)* Rum old girl.

(Footsteps heard outside, door opens. Enter Mr. Wardle, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Perker.

Miss Wardle utters a loud shriek and throws herself into a chair.)

WARDLE—*(to Jingle)* You—you're a nice rascal, aren't you?

PERKER—My dear sir, pray consider, pray. Defamation of character, action for damages. Calm yourself, my dear sir, pray.

WARDLE—How dare you drag my sister from my house?

PERKER—Ay, ay, very good, you may ask that. *(to Jingle)* How dare you, sir? eh?

JINGLE—Who the devil are you?

WARDLE—Who is he, you scoundrel? He's my lawyer, Mr. Perker of Gray's Inn. Perker, I'll have this fellow prosecuted—indicted—I'll—I'll—I'll ruin him.

(He turns abruptly on Miss Wardle.)

You, Rachel, at a time of life when you ought

to know better, what do you mean by running away with a vagabond, disgracing your family and making yourself miserable? Get on your bonnet, and come back.

JINGLE—Do nothing of the kind. Leave the room, sir, no business here—lady's free to act as she pleases—more than one-and-twenty.

WARDLE—More than one-and-twenty! More than one-and-forty.

Miss W.—I ain't.

WARDLE—You are—? You're fifty if you are a day!
(*Miss Wardle utters a loud shriek and becomes senseless.*)

Mr. PICKWICK—A glass of water.

WARDLE—A glass of water! Bring a bucket and throw it all over her; it'll do her good and she richly deserves it. Come along, I'll carry her downstairs.
(*Jingle interposes, goes to door, opens it and calls.*)

JINGLE—Boots, get me an officer.

PERKER—Stay, consider sir, consider.

JINGLE—I'll not consider, she's her own mistress; see who dares take her away unless she wishes it.

Miss W.—I won't be taken away. I don't wish it.

PERKER—(*in low tone to Mr. Wardle and Mr. Pickwick*) My dear sir, we're in a very awkward situation; it's a distressing case—very. I warned you before you came there was nothing to look to but a compromise. We must be content to suffer some pecuniary loss.

WARDLE—I'll suffer any rather than submit to this disgrace and let her, fool as she is, be made miserable for life.

PERKER—I rather think it can be done. (*aloud*) Mr. Jingle will you step aside with me for a moment?

(*Jingle assents.*)

PERKER—Now, sir, is there no way of accommodation in the matter? (*Jingle shakes his head*) Now, my dear sir, between you and me we know very well you have run off with this lady for the sake of her money. Don't frown, sir, don't frown; I say between you and me we know it. We are both men of the world and we know very well our friends here are not, eh?

(*Jingle's face relaxes, he winks his eye.*)

PERKER—Very good. Now the fact is, beyond a few pounds, the lady has little or nothing till the death of her mother—fine old lady, sir.

JINGLE—(*emphatically*) Old!

PERKER—You are right, sir, she is rather old. She comes of an old family though, sir, and there has been only one member of it who hasn't lived to eighty-five, and he was beheaded by one of the Henrys. Now the old lady is not seventy-six.

JINGLE—Well?

(*Perker offers Jingle snuff, he refuses.*)

PERKER—Ah, you don't take snuff—so much the better, expensive habit. Now, my dear sir, don't you think that £50 and liberty would be better than Miss Wardle and expectation?

JINGLE—Not half enough. (*Turns to go.*)

PERKER—Nay, nay, it's a good round sum ; a great deal to be done with £50.

JINGLE—More to be done with £150.

PERKER—Well, my dear sir, we won't waste time in splitting straws, say—say £70.

JINGLE—Won't do.

PERKER—Don't go away, my dear sir. £80—come I'll write you a cheque at once.

JINGLE—Won't do—expensive affair—money out of pocket—posting £9, licence £3, that's £12—compensation £100—£112—breach of honour—and loss of lady.

PERKER—Never mind the last two items ; that's £112—say £100—come.

JINGLE—And twenty.

PERKER—Come, come, I'll write a cheque now (*seats himself at table.*) A hundred.

JINGLE—And twenty.

PERKER—My dear sir.

WARDLE—Give it him and let him go. (*Perker writes cheque—Jingle pockets it.*)

WARDLE—Now leave this house instantly.

PERKER—My dear sir.

WARDLE—Be quiet, Perker. (*to Jingle*) Leave the room, sir.

JINGLE—Off directly—Bye, bye, Pickwick, (*takes licence from his pocket and tosses it at Mr. Pickwick's feet.*) Here—get name altered—do for Tuppy. *Exit.*

[*The spinster aunt, who has watched the final scene, horror-struck, utters a piercing shriek, and falls back fainting into Mr. Pickwick's arms.*]

CURTAIN.

BOB SAWYER'S SUPPER PARTY

FROM

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

CHARACTERS

Mr. ROBERT SAWYER—*A Medical Student.*

Medium height and of a dissipated appearance.

Mr. BENJAMIN ALLEN—*A Medical Student.*

Coarse, stout and thick-set. Short black hair and wears spectacles. His clothes are shabby and he presents a rather mildewy appearance.

Mr. PICKWICK.

Rather old, stout and bald. Wears tail-coat, tight trousers and gaiters.

Mr. WINKLE.

A tall, thin cadaverous young man. Wears green coat, plaid neckerchief and closely fitting drabs.

Mr. SNODGRASS.

Medium height and of a very poetic appearance. He is enveloped in a blue coat with a canine-skin collar.

Mr. JACK HOPKINS.

An overdressed individual.

Mr. NODDY.

A tall scorbutic youth.

Mr. GUNTER.

A short, pompous man.

Mr. RADDLE—*Bob Sawyer's Landlord.*

A mild, unassuming, weak-voiced little man.

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Mrs. RADDLE—*Bob Sawyer's Landlady.*

A fierce little woman.

BETSY—*A maid-of-all-work.*

Unkempt appearance and shambling gait.

Period—about 1830.

SCENE.

Bob Sawyer's sitting-room in Lant Street, Borough. Door R. Window back. Fireplace L. Table set for supper L.C. Sideboard back, on which stands a large tin can of porter.

Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen discovered seated, gazing disconsolately into the fire.

ALLEN—(*in a melancholy voice*) Well, it certainly is most unlucky she should have taken it into her head to turn sour, just on this occasion. She might at least have waited till to-morrow.

SAWYER—(*vehemently*) That's her malevolence. She says if I can afford to give a party, I ought to be able to pay her little bill.

ALLEN—How long has it been running?

SAWYER—Only a quarter and a month or so.

ALLEN—(*coughs*) It'll be most unpleasant if she takes it into her head to let out while those fellows are here, won't it?

SAWYER—(*shuddering*) Horrible—horrible!

(*Knock heard on door—They exchange glances.*)
Enter Mrs. Raddle.

Mrs. R.—(*trying to appear calm*) Now, Mr. Sawyer, if you'll have the kindness to settle that little bill of mine, I'll thank you, because I've got my rent to pay, and my landlord's a-waiting below now.

SAWYER—(*deferentially*) I am very sorry to put you to any inconvenience, Mrs. Raddle, but—

Mrs. R.—(*shrilly*) Oh, it isn't any inconvenience. I didn't want it particular, leastways, not before to-day; as it has to go straight to my landlord, it was as well for you to keep it as me. You promised me this afternoon, Mr. Sawyer, and any gentleman as has ever lived here has kept his word, as of course anybody as calls himself a gentleman does.

SAWYER—I am very sorry, Mrs. Raddle, but the fact is, I have been disappointed in the city to-day. Extraordinary place the city. An astonishing number of men always are getting disappointed there.

Mrs. R.—Well, Mr. Sawyer, what's that to me?

SAWYER—I have no doubt, Mrs. Raddle, that before the middle of next week, we shall be able to set ourselves quite square, and go on, on a better system, afterwards.

Mrs. R.—(*raising her voice*) Do you suppose, Mr. Sawyer, that I am a-going day after day to let a feller occupy my lodgings as never thinks of paying his rent, nor even the very money for the fresh butter and lump sugar that's bought for his breakfast, and the very milk that's took in at the street-door. Do you suppose a hard-working woman, as has lived in the street for twenty year (ten year over the way and nine and three-quarters in this very house) has nothing to do but to work herself to death after a parcel of lazy, idle fellers, that are



MRS. RADDLE

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always smoking, and drinking and lounging, when they ought to be glad to turn their hands to anything that would help 'em to pay their bills? Do you—

ALLEN —(*soothingly*) My good soul—

Mrs. R.—Have the goodness to keep your observations to yourself, sir, I beg. I don't think I let these apartments to you.

ALLEN —No, you certainly did not.

Mrs. R.—(*with lofty politeness*) Very good, sir; then p'raps you'll confine yourself to breaking the arms and the legs of the poor people in the hospitals, and keep yourself to yourself or there may be some persons here as will make you, sir.

ALLEN —But you are such an unreasonable woman?

Mrs. R.—(*loudly*) I beg your parding, young man. But who do you call a woman? Did you make that remark to me, sir?

ALLEN —Why, bless my heart.

Mrs. R.—(*fiercely*) Did you apply that name to me, sir?

ALLEN —Why, of course I did.

Mrs. R.—(*backing to open door*) Yes, of course you did. Yes, of course you did, (*raising voice to loudest pitch*) and everybody knows they may safely insult me in my own 'ouse while my 'usband sits sleeping downstairs, taking no more notice of me than if I was a dog in the street.

(*She addresses these remarks more to those outside the room, than inside.*)

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Mrs. R.—He ought to be ashamed of himself (*she sobs*) to allow his wife to be treated in this way by a parcel of young cutters and carvers of live peoples' bodies, that disgraces the lodgings, and leaving her exposed to all manner of abuse; a faint-hearted timorous wretch that's afraid to come upstairs and face the ruffianly creatures.

(She pauses for breath, and to see whether her taunts have roused her better half, but as he does not appear she bursts out weeping loudly and exit. She is heard to descend the stairs noisily and close a door with a loud crash. Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen gaze at one another in blank dismay. Loud double knock heard.)

Mr. PICKWICK.—(*outside*) Does Mr. Sawyer live here?

BETSY—(*ditto*) Yes, 'is room's straight afore yer.

Enter Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle.

SAWYER —(*in depressed tones*) Glad to see you.

Mr. P.—(*shaking his hand*) How do you do, Mr. Sawyer? And you, Mr. Allen?

ALLEN —Thank you, sir, I'm very well.

Enter Mr. Hopkins.

SAWYER —You're late, Jack.

HOPKINS —Yes, Bob, I was detained at Bartholomews.

ALLEN —Anything new?

HOPKINS —No, nothing particular. Rather a good accident brought into the casualty ward, though.

Mr. P.—What was that, sir?



HOPKINS—Only a man fallen out of a four-pair of stairs window ; but it's a very fair case—a very fair case indeed.

Mr. P.—Ah! You mean that the patient is in a fair way to recover?

HOPKINS (*carelessly*) No, I don't mean that. In fact I should rather say he wouldn't. But there must be an operation to-morrow; it'll be a magnificent sight if Slasher does it.

Mr. P.—You consider Mr. Slasher a good operator?

HOPKINS—Best alive. Took a boy's leg out of the socket last week—boy ate five apples and a ginger-bread cake, and exactly two minutes after it was all over said he wouldn't lie there to be made game of, and he'd tell his mother if they didn't begin.

Mr. P.—Dear me!

Mr. SNODGRASS—You don't say so.

HOPKINS—Pooh! That's nothing, is it, Bob?

SAWYER—(*who during the foregoing scene has been drawing table C. and arranging chairs round it*) No, no, nothing at all. (*He now takes the can of porter from the sideboard, and proceeds to pour contents into glasses.*)

ALLEN (*drawing Mr. Winkle aside*) My dear friend, I am very miserable.

WINKLE—I am extremely sorry to hear it. Is there anything I can do to alleviate your sorrow?

ALLEN—Nothing, my dear boy, nothing (*confidentially*). You recollect Arabella, Winkle, my sister

Arabella, (*Winkle starts*) a little girl, Winkle, with black eyes, when we were down at Wardle's? I don't know whether you happened to notice her—a nice little girl, Winkle. Perhaps my features may recall her countenance to your recollection.

WINKLE—(*with assumed calmness*) I perfectly remember the young lady and sincerely trust she is in good health.

ALLEN—Our friend Bob is a delightful fellow, Winkle.

WINKLE—(*with surprise*) Very!

ALLEN—I designed 'em for each other; they were made for each other, sent into the world for each other, born for each other, Winkle. There's a special destiny in the matter, my dear sir; there's only five years' difference between 'em, and both their birthdays are in August. And now, notwithstanding all my esteem, respect and veneration for my friend, Bob Sawyer, Arabella has evinced, most undutifully, a most determined antipathy to his person. I think—I think there's a prior attachment.

WINKLE—(*with great trepidation*) Have you any idea who the object of it may be?

(*Mr. Allen assumes a warlike attitude—flourishes his fist above his head and inflicts a savage blow on an imaginary skull.*)

ALLEN—(*fiercely*) I only wish I could guess. I'd show what I thought of him. I am resolved to cut the throat of any man except Bob Sawyer who aspires to the affection of my sister Arabella.



BENJAMIN ALLEN

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WINKLE—(*moving away with considerable nervousness*) Indeed, indeed.

Enter Betsy.

BETSY—Mr. Noddy and Mr. Gunter.

SAWYER—Glad to see you—glad to see you. Now come along. Supper, supper.

Exit Betsy.

(*They all move to the table and take their places. Bob Sawyer begins carving the joint of cold beef.*)

HOPKINS—By-the-by, Bob, we had a curious accident last night. A child was brought in who had swallowed a necklace.

Mr. P.—Swallowed what, sir?

HOPKINS—A necklace! Not all at once, you know: that would be too much; *you* couldn't swallow that, if the child could, eh, Mr. Pickwick?

(*Roars with laughter.*)

No, it was this way: child's parents were poor people who lived in a court. Child's eldest sister bought a necklace—common necklace—made of large, black, wooden beads. Child being fond of toys cribbed the necklace, hid it, played with it, cut the string, and swallowed a bead; thought it capital fun, went back next day, and swallowed another.

Mr. P.—Bless my heart, what a dreadful thing. Go on, sir, go on.

HOPKINS—Next day, child swallowed two beads; the day after that, he treated himself to three, and so on, till in a week's time he had got through the necklace—five-and-twenty beads in all. The sister, who was an industrious

girl, and seldom treated herself to a bit of finery, cried her eyes out at the loss of the necklace; looked high and low for it; but, I needn't say, didn't find it. A few days afterwards, the family were at dinner—baked shoulder of mutton, and potatoes under it—the child, who wasn't hungry, was playing about the room, when suddenly there was heard a devil of a noise, like a small hail storm. "Don't do that, my boy," said the father. "I ain't a doin' nothing," said the child. "Well, don't do it again," said the father. There was a short silence, and then the noise began again, worse than ever. "If you don't mind what I say, my boy," said the father, "you'll find yourself in bed, in something less than a pig's whisper." He gave the child a shake to make him obedient, and such a rattling ensued as nobody ever heard before. "Why, damme, it's in the child!" said the father; "he's got the croup in the wrong place!" "No, I haven't, father," said the child, beginning to cry, "it's the necklace; I swallowed it, father." The father caught the child up, and ran with him to the hospital, the beads in the boy's stomach rattling all the way with the jolting; and the people looking up in the air, and down in the cellars, to see where the unusual sound came from. He's in the hospital now. And he makes such a devil of a noise when he walks about, that they're obliged to muffle him in a

watchman's coat, for fear he should wake the patients.

Mr. P.—That's the most extraordinary case I ever heard of.

HOPKINS—Oh, that's nothing, is it, Bob?

SAWYER—Certainly not!

HOPKINS—Very singular things occur in our profession, I can assure you, sir.

Mr. P.—So I should be disposed to imagine.

(During the foregoing scene Mr. Noddy and Mr. Gunter have been carrying on an animated conversation in whispers, have disagreed, and become very insistent and gesticular.)

Mr. NODDY—*(starting up angrily)* Sawyer.

SAWYER—Well, Noddy?

NODDY—I should be sorry, Sawyer, to create any unpleasantness at a friend's table, and much less at yours, Sawyer—very; but I must take this opportunity of informing Mr. Gunter that he is no gentleman.

GUNTER—*(rising)* And I should be very sorry, Sawyer, to create any disturbance in the street in which you reside, but I'm afraid I shall be under the necessity of alarming your neighbours by throwing the person who has just spoken into the street.

NODDY—What do you mean by that, sir?

GUNTER—What I say, sir.

NODDY—I should like to see you do it.

GUNTER—You shall *feel* me do it in half a minute, sir.

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NODDY—I request you'll favour me with your card, sir.

GUNTER—I'll do nothing of the sort, sir.

NODDY—Why not, sir?

GUNTER—Because you'd stick it up in your chimney-piece, and delude your visitors into the false belief that a gentleman had been to see you, sir.

NODDY—Sir, a friend of mine shall wait on you in the morning.

GUNTER—Sir, I'm very much obliged to you for the caution, and I'll leave particular instructions with the servant to lock the plate up.

Mr. P.—Come, come, gentlemen, consider the impropriety of your conduct.

NODDY—(*to Mr. Pickwick*) I should like to point out, sir, that my father was fully as respectable as Mr. Gunter's father.

GUNTER—And I should like to point out, sir, that my father's son is as good a man as Mr. Noddy any day of the week.

NODDY—What do you mean by that, sir?

GUNTER—What I say, sir.

NODDY—You're a jackanapes, sir.

GUNTER—Sir, you're another.

SAWYER—(*interposing*) Now, gentlemen, gentlemen, I beg you. Consider the feelings of all present.

NODDY—He insulted my father, Sawyer.

GUNTER—I did nothing of the sort, sir.

Mr. P.—There, there, gentlemen, you see it's all been a misunderstanding.

NODDY—If I have mistaken Mr. Gunter's meaning, I am sorry.

GUNTER—And if I have mistaken Mr. Noddy's meaning, I am sorry.

Mr. P.—Come now, that's right. Shake hands, gentlemen. (*They do so with much fervour.*)

NODDY—You know, Sawyer, I have always said I infinitely preferred Mr. Gunter to my own brother.

GUNTER—And you know, Allen, that I have always preferred Mr. Noddy to my own father.

(*They again shake hands.*)

SAWYER—And now, to set things going again, we'll have the spirits in. Betsy!

(*He rises and produces a bottle from the side-board, and hands round a paper of cigars.*)

SAWYER—(*calling*) Betsy! Betsy!

Enter Betsy carrying a tray of glasses.

BETSY—(*sleepily*) I'm a-comin', Mister Sawyer.

SAWYER—Put down the glasses, Betsy, and fetch the warm water. Be brisk, there's a good girl!

BETSY—(*placing tray on table*) You can't 'ave no warm water.

SAWYER—No warm water!

BETSY—(*shaking her head*) No. Misses Raddle says you warn't to 'ave none. (*General surprise.*)

SAWYER—(*with desperate sternness*) Bring up the warm water instantly—*instantly*.

BETSY—No, I can't. Missis Raddle raked out the fire afore she went to bed, and locked up the kittle.

Mr. P.—(*to Sawyer*) Pray don't disturb yourself about such a trifle. Cold water will do very well.

(*General murmur of assent.*)

Exit Betsy.

SAWYER—(*with a ghastly smile*) My landlady is subject to some slight attacks of mental derangement. I fear I must give her warning.

ALLEN—(*helping himself to spirits and passing the bottle*) No, don't.

SAWYER (*firmly*) I fear I must. I'll pay her what I owe her, and give her warning to-morrow morning. (*Aside*) I wish I could.

ALLEN—(*to Hopkins*) I say, Jack, what about singing us that song of yours?

Mr. P.—We shall be delighted to hear it, sir.

HOPKINS—Alright, I don't mind.

(*He rises and sings very loudly the first verse of "The King, God bless him," to an air compounded of "The Bay of Biscay" and "A Frog he would a-wooing go." They all beat time on table and join lustily in chorus. As Hopkins is about to commence the second verse Mr. Pickwick rises and holds up his hand.*)

Mr. P.—Hush! I beg your pardon, but I thought I heard somebody calling from upstairs.

(*General silence. Bob Sawyer fingers his chin nervously.*)

Mrs. R.—(*outside*) Mr. Sawyer! Mr. Sawyer!

Mr. P.—There, I hear it now.

(*Loud stamping on stairs. Enter Mrs. Raddle, arrayed in night attire and a dressing-gown. She wears a night cap, and her hair is in*

papers. Mr. Raddle also in night garb lingers in the background.)

Mr. P.—God bless my soul! who is this?

SAWYER—(*in dismay*) It's my landlady. Yes, Mrs. Raddle?

Mrs. R.—(*shrilly and with great rapidity*) What do you mean by this, Mr. Sawyer? Ain't it enough to be swindled out of one's rent, besides being abused and insulted by your friends that dares to call themselves men, without having the house turned out o' window, and noise enough made to bring the fire-engines here. Turn them wretches away.

Mr. R.—(*feebly*) You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

Mrs. R.—Ashamed of themselves! Why don't you go and knock 'em everyone downstairs? You would if you were a man.

Mr. R.—I should if I was a dozen men, my dear, but they've the advantage of me in numbers, my dear.

Mrs. R.—Ugh! you coward! (*turning to Bob Sawyer with renewed violence*) Do you mean to turn those wretches away or not, Mr. Sawyer?

SAWYER—(*miserably*) They're going, Mrs. Raddle, they're going. (*To others*) I'm afraid you had better go. I thought you were making too much noise.

NODDY—It's a very unfortunate thing just as we were getting comfortable.

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GUNTER—Hardly to be borne, my dear Sawyer,
hardly to be borne.

HOPKINS—It's not to be endured. Let's have
another verse. Here goes—

SAWYER—(*interposing*) No, no, Jack, it's a capital
song, but I am afraid we had better not have
that other verse. The people of the house don't
seem to like it, and (*dropping his voice*) they're
very violent people.

HOPKINS—Look here, Bob, can I do anything?
Shall I pitch into the landlord? (*Mr. Raddle
hastily disappears.*) Shall I keep on ringing
the bell, or groan upon the staircase? You
may command me, Bob.

SAWYER—I am very much indebted to you, but I
think the best plan to avoid further dispute is
for us to break up at once.

Mrs. R.—Mr. Sawyer, are them brutes going?

SAWYER—Yes, Mrs. Raddle, they're going directly.

Mrs. R.—Going! what did they ever come for?

Mr. P.—(*with a peacemaking air*) My dear ma'am—

Mrs. R.—Get along with you, you old wretch.

Old enough to be his grandfather, you villain.

You're worse than ony of 'em. Get along.

Mr. P.—Really, my dear ma'am—

(*He is hurried out of the room by Mr. Snod-
grass and Mr. Winkle. The others all follow,
leaving Bob Sawyer seated disconsolately at
table. Street door is heard loudly closing.*)

Mrs. R.—(*advancing*) Now, Mr. Sawyer—

CURTAIN.

BARDELL v. PICKWICK

FROM

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

CHARACTERS.

Mr. JUSTICE STARELEIGH

Mr. SERGEANT BUZFUZ, } *Counsels for the*
Mr. SKIMPIN, } *Plaintiff.*

Mr. SERGEANT SNUBBIN, } *Counsels for the*
Mr. PHUNKY, } *Defendant.*

Mr. PICKWICK, (*The Defendant*).

Mr. SAMUEL WELLER, (*His servant*).

Mr. WINKLE, (*His friend*).

Mr. PERKER, (*His attorney*).

Messrs. DODSON AND FOGG, (*Attorneys for the*
Plaintiff).

FOREMAN OF THE JURY.

Mrs. BARDELL, (*The Plaintiff*).

Master BARDELL, (*Her son*).

Mrs. CLUPPINS, } *Her friends.*
Mrs. SANDARS, }

Jurymen, Ushers, Clerks of Court, Reporters, Officers,
Barristers, Spectators, etc., etc.

Period: About 1830.

SCENE.

The Court of Common Pleas. General condition of great activity prevails.

Enter Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Perker, Mr. Sergeant Snubbin and Mr. Phunky.

Enter Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz on opposite side. He and Mr. Sergeant Snubbin nod to one another.

MR. SERGEANT BUZFUZ — A fine morning! (*Passes on and engages in conversation with Mr. Skimpin.*)

MR. PICKWICK — (*to Perker*) Who's that red-faced man who said it was a fine morning, and nodded to our counsel?

PERKER — Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz! He's opposed to us; he leads on the other side. That's his junior, Mr. Skimpin, he's talking to.

MR. P. — (*hotly*) Then I should like to know how he dares tell Mr. Sergeant Snubbin it's a fine morning.

PERKER — Hush, my dear sir, here comes the Judge.
Enter Mr. Justice Stareleigh.

USHER — Silence. Silence in Court.

PERKER — (*to Mr. Pickwick*) This way, my dear sir, this way. (*Leads him to seat near where Mr. Sergeant Snubbin and Mr. Phunky are talking.*)

A JURYMAN—(*rising*) My Lord, I beg this Court's pardon, but I hope this Court will excuse my attendance.

THE JUDGE—On what grounds, sir?

THE JURYMAN—I am a chemist, my Lord, and have no assistant.

THE JUDGE—I can't help that, sir, you should hire one.

THE JURYMAN—I can't afford it, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—(*irritably*) Then you ought to be able to afford it.

THE JURYMAN—I know I ought to, if I got on as well as I deserved, but I don't, my Lord. Am I to be excused, my Lord?

THE JUDGE—Certainly not!—

THE JURYMAN—Very well, my Lord. I merely want to observe, then, that I've left nobody but an errand boy in my shop. He's a very nice boy, my Lord, but he is not acquainted with drugs, and I know that the prevailing impression in his mind is, that Epsom salts means oxalic acid, and syrup of senna, laudanum. There'll be murder before this trial's over. That's all, my Lord.

(He assumes a placid expression of countenance and resumes his seat.)

Enter Messrs Dodson and Fogg, leading in Mrs. Bardell, who holds a handkerchief before her eyes. They are followed by Mrs. Sandars, Mrs. Cluppings, and Master Bardell. They seat them-

selves on further end of bench on which is Mr. Pickwick. Mrs. Bardell frantically embraces Master Bardell, which makes a great effect in court.

CLERK OF COURT — Bardell and Pickwick.

SERGEANT BUZFUZ — I am for the plaintiff, my Lord.

JUDGE — Who is with you, brother Buzfuz?

Mr. SKIMPIN — I am, my Lord.

SERGEANT SNUBBIN — I appear for the defendant, my Lord.

THE JUDGE — Anybody with you, brother Snubbin?

SNUBBIN — Mr. Phunky, my Lord.

THE JUDGE — (*writing in his notebook*) Sergeant Buzfuz and Mr. Skimpin for the plaintiff, and for the defendant Sergeant Snubbin and Mr. Monkey.

PHUNKY — Beg your Lordship's pardon, Phunky!

THE JUDGE — Oh, very good. I never had the pleasure of hearing the gentleman's name before. Go on.

(*Mr. Sergeant Buzfuz rises with great majesty.*)

BUZFUZ — My Lord! Gentlemen of the Jury! Never in the whole course of my professional experience—never from the first moment of applying myself to the practice and the study of the law—have I approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion, or with such a heavy sense of the responsibility imposed upon me—a responsibility, I will say, I could never have supported, were it not that I am buoyed up and sustained by a conviction so strong that it amounts to positive certainty, that the cause



of truth and justice, or, in other words, that the cause of my much injured and most oppressed client must prevail with the high-minded and intelligent dozen of men whom I now see in the box before me.

(This creates a great impression on the jury, several of whom begin to take voluminous notes.)

BUZFUZ — You have heard from my learned friend, gentlemen, that this is an action for a breach of promise of marriage, in which the damages are laid at £1500. But you have not heard what are the facts and circumstances of the case. Those facts and circumstances, gentlemen, you shall hear detailed by me, and proved by the unimpeachable female whom I will place in that box before you. The plaintiff, gentlemen, *(he drops his voice to a low melancholy)* the plaintiff is a widow ; yes, gentlemen, a widow. The late Mr. Bardell, after enjoying for many years the esteem and confidence of his sovereign, as one of the guardians of the royal revenues, glided almost imperceptibly from the world, to seek elsewhere for that repose and peace which a custom-house can never afford. Sometime before his death he had stamped his likeness upon a little boy. With this little boy, the only pledge of her departed exciseman, Mrs. Bardell shrunk from the world, and courted the retirement and tranquility of Goswell Street ; and here she placed

in her front parlour-window a written placard, bearing this inscription, "Apartments furnished for a single gentleman. Inquire within."

(He pauses.)

A JUROR—There is no date to that, is there, sir?

BUZFUZ—There is no date, gentlemen, but I am instructed to say that it was put in the plaintiff's parlour window just this time three years. I entreat the attention of the jury to the wording of this document: "Apartments for a single gentleman!" Mrs. Bardell's opinion of the opposite sex, gentlemen, was derived from a long contemplation of the inestimable qualities of her lost husband. She had no fear—she had no distrust—all was confidence and reliance. "Mr. Bardell," said the widow, "Mr. Bardell was a man of honour—Mr. Bardell was a man of his word—Mr. Bardell was no deceiver—Mr. Bardell was once a single gentleman himself; to single gentlemen I look for protection, for assistance, for comfort and for consolation—in single gentlemen I shall perpetually see something to remind me of what Mr. Bardell was, when he first won my young and untried affections; to a single gentleman, then, shall my lodgings be let." Actuated by this beautiful and touching impulse (among the best impulses of our imperfect nature, gentlemen,)—the lonely and desolate widow dried her tears, furnished her first floor, caught her innocent boy to her

maternal bosom, and put the bill up in her parlour window. Did it remain there long? No. The serpent was on the watch, the train was laid, the mine was preparing, the sapper and miner was at work. Before the bill had been in the parlour window three days—three days, gentlemen—a Being, erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, knocked at the door of Mrs. Bardell's house. He inquired within; he took the lodgings; and on the very next day he entered into possession of them. This man was Pickwick—Pickwick the defendant.

(He pauses for breath. The silence awakes Mr. Justice Stareleigh, who immediately writes down something with a pen without any ink in it, and looks unusually profound.)

Of this man Pickwick I will say little; the subject presents but few attractions; and I, gentlemen, am not the man, nor are you, gentlemen, the men, to delight in the contemplation of revolting heartlessness, and of systematic villainy. I say systematic villainy, gentlemen, and when I say systematic villainy, let me tell the defendant Pickwick if he be in court, as I am informed he is, that it would have been more decent in him, more becoming, in better judgment, and in better taste, if he had stopped away. Let me tell him, gentlemen, that any gestures of dissent or disapprobation in which he may indulge in this

court will not go down with you ; that you will know how to value and how to appreciate them ; and let me tell him further, as my Lord will tell you, gentlemen, that a counsel, in the discharge of his duty to his client, is neither to be intimidated, nor bullied, nor put down ; and that any attempt to do either the one or the other or the first or the last, will recoil on the head of the attempter, be he plaintiff or be he defendant, be his name Pickwick, or Noakes, or Stoakes, or Stiles, or Brown, or Thompson. I shall show you, gentlemen, that for two years Pickwick continued to reside constantly, and without interruption or intermission, at Mrs. Bardell's house. I shall show you that Mrs. Bardell, during the whole of that time, waited on him, attended to his comforts, cooked his meals, looked out his linen for the washer-woman when it went abroad, darned, aired, and prepared it for wear when it came home, and, in short, enjoyed his fullest trust and confidence. I shall show you that, on many occasions, he gave halfpence, and on some occasions even sixpences, to her little boy ; and I shall prove to you, by a witness whose testimony it will be impossible for my learned friend to weaken or controvert, that on one occasion he patted the boy on the head, and made use of this remarkable expression—“ How should you like to have another father ? ” I shall prove to you, gentlemen, that about a year ago, Pickwick suddenly began to absent

himself from home, during long intervals, as if with the intention of gradually breaking off from my client; but I shall show you also that his resolution was not at that time sufficiently strong, or that his better feelings conquered—if better feelings he has—or that the charms and accomplishments of my client prevailed against his unmanly intentions, by proving to you that on one occasion, when he returned from the country, he distinctly and in terms, offered her marriage, previously, however, taking special care that there should be no witnesses to their solemn contract; and I am in a situation to prove to you, on the testimony of three of his own friends—most unwilling witnesses, gentlemen, most unwilling witnesses—that on that morning he was discovered by them holding the plaintiff in his arms, and soothing her agitation by his caresses and endearments.

(A visible impression is produced upon the auditors. He draws forth two very small scraps of paper.)

BUZFUZ—And now, gentlemen, but one word more.

Two letters have passed between these parties, letters which are admitted to be in the handwriting of the defendant, and which speak volumes indeed. These letters, too, bespeak the character of the man. They are not open, fervent, eloquent epistles, breathing nothing but the language of affectionate attachment; they are covert, sly, underhanded communications, but, fortunately, far more conclusive than

if couched in the most glowing language and the most poetic imagery—letters that must be viewed with a cautious and suspicious eye—letters that were evidently intended at the time, by Pickwick, to mislead and delude any third parties into whose hands they might fall, Let me read the first:—"Garraway's, twelve o'clock. Dear Mrs. B.—Chops and Tomata sauce. Yours, Pickwick!" Gentlemen, what does this mean? Chops and Tomata Sauce. Yours, Pickwick! Chops! Gracious heavens! and Tomata Sauce! Gentlemen, is the happiness of a sensitive and confiding female to be trifled away by such shallow artifices as these? The next has no date whatever, which is in itself suspicious—"Dear Mrs. B., I shall not be at home till to-morrow. Slow coach." And then follows this very remarkable expression—"Don't trouble yourself about the warming-pan." The warming-pan! Why, gentlemen, who *does* trouble himself about a warming-pan? When was the peace of mind of man or woman broken or disturbed by a warming-pan, which is in itself a harmless, a useful, and I will add, gentlemen, a comforting article of domestic furniture? Why is Mrs. Bardell so earnestly entreated not to agitate herself about this warming-pan, unless (as is no doubt the case) it is a mere cover for hidden fire, a mere substitute for some endearing word or promise, agreeably to a preconcerted system of correspondence, art-

fully contrived by Pickwick with a view to his contemplated desertion, and which I am not in a condition to explain? And what does this allusion to the slow coach mean? For aught I know, it may be a reference to Pickwick himself, who has most unquestionably been a criminally slow coach during the whole of this transaction, but whose speed will now be very unexpectedly accelerated, and whose wheels, gentlemen, as he will find to his cost, will very soon be greased by you!" *(He pauses to see whether the jury smile at his joke.)*

BUZFUZ — But enough of this, gentlemen. It is difficult to smile with an aching heart; it is ill jesting when our deepest sympathies are awakened. My client's hopes and prospects are ruined, and it is no figure of speech to say that her occupation is gone indeed. The bill is down, but there is no tenant. Eligible single gentlemen pass and repass, but there is no invitation for them to inquire within or without. All is gloom and silence in the house; even the voice of the child is hushed. His infant sports are disregarded when his mother weeps. But Pickwick, gentlemen, Pickwick, the ruthless destroyer of this domestic oasis in the desert of Goswell Street; Pickwick, who has choked up the well, and thrown ashes on the sward; Pickwick, who comes before you to-day with his heartless Tomata Sauce and warming-pans, Pickwick still rears his head

with unblushing effrontery, and gazes without a sigh on the ruin he has made. Damages, gentlemen, heavy damages, is the only punishment with which you can visit him, the only recompense you can award to my client. And for those damages she now appeals to an enlightened, a high-minded, a right-feeling, a conscientious, a dispassionate, a sympathising, a contemplative jury of her civilised countrymen.

(He sits down, and Mr. Justice Stareleigh wakes up.)

BUZFUZ—*(rising)* Call Elizabeth Cluppins.

1st USHER—Elizabeth Tuppins.

2nd USHER—Elizabeth Jupkins.

3rd USHER—*(outside)* Elizabeth Muffins.

(Mrs. Cluppins, with the assistance of Messrs Dodson and Fogg, is hoisted into the witness box. She is sworn by an officer, and sobs violently.)

BUZFUZ—Mrs. Cluppins, pray compose yourself. Do you recollect, ma'am, being in Mrs. Bardell's back one pair of stairs on one particular morning in July last, when she was dusting Pickwick's apartment?

Mrs. C.—Yes, my Lord and Jury, I do.

BUZFUZ—Mr. Pickwick's sitting-room was the first floor front, I believe.

Mrs. C.—Yes, it were, sir.

THE JUDGE—What were you doing in the back room, ma'am?

Mrs. C.—My Lord and Jury, I will not deceive you,



MRS. CLUPPINS

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THE JUDGE—You had better not, ma'am.

Mrs. C.—I was there unbeknown to Mrs. Bardell. I had been out with a little basket, gentlemen, to buy three pounds of kidney purtaties, which was three pound, twopence ha'penny, when I see Mrs. Bardell's street-door on the jar.

THE JUDGE—On the what?

SERGEANT SNUBBIN—Partly open, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—She said on the jar.

BUZFUZ—It's the same thing, my Lord. Continue, Mrs. Cluppins.

Mrs. CLUPPINS—I walked in, gentlemen, just to say good-mornin', and went up in a permiscuous manner, upstairs, and into the back room. Gentlemen, there was the sound of voices in the front room, and—

BUZFUZ—And you listened, I believe, Mrs. Cluppins?

Mrs. C.—(*majestically*) Beggin' your pardon, sir, I would scorn the haction. The voices were very loud, sir, and forced themselves upon my ear.

BUZFUZ—Well, Mrs. Cluppins, you were not listening but you heard the voices. Was one of those voices Pickwick's?

Mrs. C.—Yes, it were, sir.

BUZFUZ—Tell the Jury what you heard, Mrs. Cluppins.

Mrs. C.—Well, my Lord and Jury, I heard Mr. Pickwick's voice asking did Mrs. Bardell think that it would be a much greater expense to keep two people than one.

BUZFUZ—Yes, and what then?

Mrs. C.—Then I heard Mr. Pickwick say as 'ow it would be nice for Mrs. Bardell to 'ave some-one to sit with her when he was in town.
(*She pauses.*)

THE JUDGE—Yes, yes, my good woman, go on.

Mrs. C.—Well, then I peeped round the door, which, my Lord and Jury, was partly hopen, and I see'd Mrs. Bardell a-lyin' in 'is (*pointing to Mr. Pickwick*) arms.

THE JUDGE—And did you hear or see anything else?

Mrs. C.—No, my Lord and Jury, I did not.

BUZFUZ—Thank you, Mrs. Cluppins, then you may step down.

(*She does so and resumes her seat by Mrs. Bardell.*)

Mr. SKIMPIN—Nathaniel Winkle!

(*Enter Mr. Winkle.*)

Mr. WINKLE—Here!

(*He enters the witness box and is sworn. He then bows to the judge.*)

THE JUDGE—(*sharply*) Don't look at me, sir, look at the Jury.

Mr. S.—(*in a hectoring tone*) Now, sir, have the goodness to let his Lordship and the Jury know what your name is, will you?

Mr. W.—Winkle.

THE JUDGE—(*angrily*) What's your Christian name, sir?

Mr. W.—Nathaniel, sir.

THE JUDGE—Daniel, any other name?

Mr. W.—Nathaniel, sir—my Lord, I mean.



NATHANIEL WINKLE

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THE JUDGE—Nathaniel Daniel or Daniel Nathaniel.

Mr. W.—No, my Lord, only Nathaniel, not Daniel at all.

THE JUDGE—What did you tell me it was Daniel for then, sir?

Mr. W.—I didn't, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—You did, sir. How could I have got Daniel on my notes unless you told me so, sir?

Mr. S.—Mr. Winkle evidently has rather a short memory, my Lord. We shall find means to refresh it before we have quite done with him, I daresay.

THE JUDGE—You had better be careful, sir.

Mr. S.—Now, Mr. Winkle, attend to me, if you please, sir, and let me recommend you, for your own sake to bear in mind his Lordship's injunctions to be careful. I believe you are a particular friend of Pickwick, the defendant, are you not?

Mr. W.—I have known Mr. Pickwick now, as well as I can recollect at this moment, nearly—

Mr. S.—Pray, Mr. Winkle, do not evade the question. Are you, or are you not, a particular friend of the defendant?

Mr. W.—I was about to say, that—

Mr. S.—Will you, or will you not, answer my question?

THE JUDGE—If you don't answer the question, you'll be committed, sir.

Mr. S.—Come, sir, yes or no, if you please.

Mr. W.—Yes, I am.

Mr. S.—Why couldn't you say so at once, sir?
Perhaps you know the plaintiff too, eh, Mr. Winkle?

Mr. W.—I don't know her; I've seen her.

Mr. S.—Oh, you don't know her, but you've seen her? Now, have the goodness to tell the gentlemen of the jury what you mean by that, Mr. Winkle.

Mr. W.—I mean I am not intimate with her, but that I have seen her when I went to call on Mr. Pickwick, in Goswell Street.

Mr. S.—How often have you seen her?

Mr. W.—How often?

Mr. S.—Yes, Mr. Winkle, how often? I'll repeat the question a dozen times, if you require it. Have you seen her twenty times?

Mr. W.—Certainly, more than that.

Mr. S.—Have you seen her a hundred times?

Mr. W.—(*hesitating*) No, not more than fifty times, I think.

Mr. S.—Not more than fifty times, you think. Come, sir, you had better be careful.

Mr. W.—It might have been seventy-five times perhaps.

Mr. S.—(*to the jury, who immediately look very wise and take notes*) Mr. Winkle now thinks he may have seen the plaintiff seventy-five times. (*To Mr. Winkle*) Now, Mr. Winkle, pray, do you remember calling on the defendant Pickwick at their apartments in the plaintiff's house in Goswell Street, on one particular morning, in the month of July last?

Mr. W.—Yes, I do.

Mr. S.—Now, sir, tell the gentlemen of the jury what you saw on entering the defendant's room. Come ; don't look about the court, sir, but out with it ; we must have it, sooner or later.

Mr. W.—(*with some hesitation*) The defendant, Mr. Pickwick, was holding the plaintiff in his arms, with his hands clasping her waist, and the plaintiff appeared to have fainted away.

Mr. S.—Did you hear the defendant say anything ?

Mr. W.—I heard him call Mrs. Bardell a good creature, and I heard him ask her to compose herself, for what a situation it was if anybody should come, or words to that effect.

Mr. S.—Now, Mr. Winkle, I have only one more question to ask you, and I beg you to bear in mind his Lordship's caution. Will you undertake to swear that Pickwick, the defendant, did not say on the occasion in question "My dear Mrs. Bardell, you're a good creature ; compose yourself to this situation, for to this situation you must come," or words to that effect.

Mr. W.—(*confused*) I didn't understand him so, certainly. I was on the staircase, and couldn't hear distinctly. The impression on my mind is—

Mr. S.—The gentlemen of the jury want none of the impressions on your mind, Mr. Winkle, which I fear would be of little service to honest, straightforward men. You were on the stair-

case, and didn't distinctly hear ; but you will not swear that Pickwick did not make use of the expressions I have quoted. Do I understand that ?

Mr. W.—No, I will not.

Mr. S.—Thank you. You may stand down, Mr. Winkle.

Exit Mr. Winkle.

SERGEANT SNUBBIN —Call Mrs. Sandars.

(Mrs. Sandars enters the box and is sworn.)

SNUBBIN —Now, Mrs. Sandars, do you think it at all likely that Mr. Pickwick ever proposed to the plaintiff ?

Mrs. S.—Yes, sir, I do. I've always said and believed 'e'd marry 'er.

SNUBBIN.—Did you ever hear it said by anyone that Mrs. Bardell was engaged to Mr. Pickwick ?

Mrs. S.—Yes, sir ; after last July it was the common talk of the neighbourhood. I was told it myself by Mrs. Mudberry which keeps a mangle, and by Mrs. Bunkin which clear starches, but I does not see either of 'em here to-day.

SNUBBIN —Never mind whether you see Mrs. Bunkin or Mrs. Mudberry. Now, is it not a fact, Mrs. Sandars, that last July Mrs. Bardell was keeping company—as I believe it is called—with the neighbouring baker.

Mrs. S.—No, sir, not as I knows on, but I does know that the baker, although then a single gentleman, is now married.

SNUBBIN—Are you prepared to swear that Mrs. Bardell was not in love with the baker?

Mrs. S.—No, sir, I am not, but I should think that the baker couldn't have been very fond of Mrs. Bardell, seein' as 'ow he's married another lady since.

SNUBBIN—Why do you think Mrs. Bardell fainted away on that morning in July?

Mrs. S.—I should say, sir, because as 'ow Mr. Pickwick 'ad asked her to name the day. (*to Judge*) I know, my Lord, that I fainted away stone-dead when Mr. Sandars asked me to name the day, and I believe 'as 'ow everybody as calls themselves a lady would do the same.

SNUBBIN—Come now, Mrs. Sandars; during Mr. Sandars courtship of yourself, did you ever receive letters from him, calling you “chops” or “tomata sauce?”

Mrs. S.—(*thoughtfully*) No, sir, I can't say as I ever did. But he often called me “duck,” and 'e was particular fond of ducks. So p'r'aps, sir, if a gentleman was ekally fond of chops or tomata sauce, he might have called 'er that, as a term of affection.

SNUBBIN—Thank you, Mrs. Sandars, you may go.

BUZFUZ—One moment, Mrs. Sandars, there is one question I should like to ask you. Did you, or did you not, hear the defendant ask the plaintiff's son how he should like to have another father?

Mrs. S.—Yes, sir, I did.

BUZFUZ—Thank you, you may go.

(Mrs. Sandars leaves the box.)

BUZFUZ—Call Samuel Weller.

USHER—Samuel Weller.

Enter Samuel Weller. He goes into the box and is sworn. He then places his hat upon the floor, his arms upon the rail, and surveys the court with a cheerful aspect.

THE JUDGE—What's your name, sir?

SAM—Samuel Veller, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—Do you spell it with a V. or a W.?

SAM—That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my Lord. I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a V.

Voice among the spectators—Quite right too, Samivel, quite right. Put it down a we, my Lord, put it down a we.

THE JUDGE—Who is that who dares address the court? Usher!

USHER—Yes, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—Bring that person here instantly.

USHER—*(helplessly looking about court)* Yes, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—*(to Sam)* Do you know who that was?

SAM—I rayther suspect it was my father, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—Do you see him here now?

SAM—*(staring at ceiling)* No, I don't, my Lord.

THE JUDGE—If you could have pointed him out I would have committed him instantly.

SAM—Very good, my Lord.

BUZFUZ—Now, Mr. Weller.

SAM—(*cheerfully*) Now, sir.

BUZFUZ—I believe you are in the service of Mr. Pickwick, the defendant in this case. Speak up, if you please, Mr. Weller.

SAM—I mean to speak up, sir. I am in the service o' that 'ere gen'l'man, and a wery good service it is.

BUZFUZ—Little to do, and plenty to get, I suppose.

SAM—Oh, quite enough to get, as the soldier said ven they ordered him three hundred and fifty lashes.

THE JUDGE—You must not tell us what the soldier or any other man said. It's not evidence.

SAM—Wery good, my Lord.

BUZFUZ—Do you recollect anything particular happening on the morning when you were first engaged by the defendant, eh, Mr. Weller?

SAM—Yes, I do, sir.

BUZFUZ—Have the goodness to tell the jury what it was.

SAM—I had a reg'lar new fit out o' clothes that mornin,' gen'l'men o' the jury, and that was a wery particklar and uncommon circumstance with me in those days.

(*General titter in Court.*)

THE JUDGE—(*angrily*) You had better be careful, sir.

SAM—(*serenely*) So Mr. Pickwick said at the time, my Lord, and I was wery careful o' that suit o' clothes; wery careful indeed.

(*The judge looks sternly at him.*)

BUZFUZ—Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Weller, that you saw nothing of this fainting on the part of the plaintiff in the arms of the defendant, which you have heard described by the witnesses?

SAM—Certainly not! I was in the passage till they called me up, and then the old lady was not there.

BUZFUZ—(*impressively*) Now, attend, Mr. Weller. You were in the passage, and yet saw nothing of what was going forward. Have you a pair of eyes, Mr. Weller?

SAM—(*calmly*) Yes, I have a pair of eyes, and that's just it. If they was a pair o' patent double million magnifying gas microscopes of hextra power, p'r'aps I might be able to see through a flight o' stairs and a deal door; but bein' only eyes, you see, my wision's limited.

(The court again titters and the Judge smiles. Sergeant Buzfuz looks very foolish, and then confers with Messrs. Dodson and Fogg.)

BUZFUZ—(*endeavouring to conceal his vexation*) Now, Mr. Weller, I'll ask you a question on another point, if you please.

SAM—(*with great good humour*) If you please, sir.

BUZFUZ—Do you remember going up to Mrs. Bardell's house, one night in November last?

SAM—Oh, yes, very well.

BUZFUZ—(*brightening*) Oh, you do remember that, Mr. Weller. I thought we should get at something at last.

SAM—I rayther thought that too, sir.

BUZFUZ—I suppose you went up to have a little talk about this trial—eh, Mr. Weller?

(He looks knowingly at jury.)

SAM—I went up to pay the rent, but we did get a-talkin' about the trial.

BUZFUZ—Oh, you did get a-talking about the trial. Now what passed about the trial; will you have the goodness to tell us, Mr. Weller?

SAM—Vith all the pleasure in life, sir. Arter a few unimportant observations from the two virtuous females, as has been examined here to-day, the ladies gets into a very great state o' admiration at the honourable conduct of Mr. Dodson and Fogg—they two gen'l'men as is settin' near you now.

(General attention centred on Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, who endeavour to look as virtuous as they can.)

BUZFUZ—The attorneys for the plaintiff. Well! they spoke in high terms of their honourable conduct, did they?

SAM—Yes; they said what a very generous thing it was o' them to have taken the case up on spec, and to charge nothin' at all for costs, unless they got 'em out o' Mr. Pickwick.

(General laughter. Messrs. Dodson and Fogg look extremely uncomfortable.)

USHER—Silence. Silence in court.

BUZFUZ—(*to Sam*) Stand down, sir, stand down.
I will not trouble the court by asking you
any more questions.

SAM—(*picking up his hat and looking round deliberately*) Would any other gen'l'man like to
ask me anythin'?

SERGEANT SNUBBIN—(*laughing*) Not I, Mr. Weller

BUZFUZ—(*impatiently*) You may go down, sir.

(*Sam does so.*)

SNUBBIN—I have no objection in admitting, my
Lord, if it will save the examination of other
witnesses, that Mr. Pickwick is retired from
business, and is a gentleman of considerable
private property.

BUZFUZ—Very well. Then that's my case, my Lord.
(*Sits down.*)

SNUBBIN—My Lord, gentlemen of the jury, I shall
not detain the court long, but will endeavour
to be as brief as circumstances will permit.
I am here to-day, gentlemen, simply to ask
for justice. Justice for my client, who, I
venture to say, is a most maligned and
most unfortunate man. He has to-day
been held up to you as a person without
heart, without feelings, without principles, as
one who goes his way through life leaving
shattered hopes and broken hearts in his wake.
He has been accused, and most unjustly
accused, I say, of harshness and infidelity.
And yet, gentlemen, through life my client
has ever borne a reputation unsullied by the
slightest blemish and a character widely famed

for truth and honour. As tenant of the plaintiff he was a model of all the virtues—orderly in his habits, always thoughtful for the comfort of others, and punctual in his payments—in short, my Lord and gentlemen of the jury, his word was his bond. My learned friend does not endeavour to assert otherwise, but sets much store on two letters, written by my client to the plaintiff. Meanings have been read into these two epistles—epistles which were written in all the fulness of an innocent heart—meanings they were never intended to imply. Take the first letter. Now, gentlemen, I ask you, as right-minded Englishmen, could the words “chops and tomata sauce” bear any other meaning than one related to Mr. Pickwick’s choice of comestibles for an evening meal upon his return from some country excursion. Then, gentlemen, take letter number two, in which occurs the following passage, “Slow coach; don’t trouble yourself about the warming-pan.” My learned friend asks who would trouble about a warming pan? I reply to him, gentlemen, the plaintiff herself would have done, had it not been for the kindly good-nature of my client. The fact that he wrote this letter is in itself proof positive of his thoughtfulness. Although undergoing all the discomforts of a journey in a slow coach, although very possibly chilled to the bone from exposure to icy winds, he yet finds time

to write to the plaintiff, telling her not to trouble herself to sit up and prepare the warming-pan, and this, gentlemen, despite the fact, as we all know, that a warming-pan is a particularly grateful addition to one's comfort after a cold coach journey. I need say no more, gentlemen of the jury, and will now leave my client's case in your hands, and I do so with the absolute conviction that you will see that justice is done and will restore his honour, intact, to him again.

(He resumes his seat.)

THE JUDGE—(*referring to his notes*) Gentlemen of the Jury, it only remains now for me to sum up the principal points of the case, which I shall now proceed to do. You have heard the evidence of both sides. You have heard what Sergeant Buzfuz has had to say about the letters written by the defendant to the plaintiff. You have also heard what Sergeant Snubbin has had to say about them. I shall therefore leave you to draw your own conclusions. If Mrs. Bardell is right in her assertion that Mr. Pickwick proposed marriage to her, it is perfectly clear that she is right and that Mr. Pickwick is wrong when he says he didn't. If you think the evidence of Mrs. Cluppins worthy of credence, then you will believe it, but if you do not, why then you will not believe it. If you are satisfied that a proposal of marriage has been committed, you will find for the plaintiff with such damages as you

think proper. If, on the other hand, you consider that no promise of marriage has been given, then you will find for the defendant with no damages at all. That is all I have to say, gentlemen. You may now retire and consider your verdict.

(He sits back and closes his eyes. The jury confer together.)

THE FOREMAN OF JURY—My Lord, we are agreed upon our verdict.

CLERK OF COURT—Do you find for the plaintiff or for the defendant?

THE F. OF J.—For the plaintiff.

C. OF C.—With what damages?

THE F. OF J.—Seven hundred and fifty pounds.

CURTAIN.

SAM WELLER AND THE BATH
FOOTMEN

FROM THE
PICKWICK PAPERS

CHARACTERS.

SAMUEL WELLER.

Medium height, and sharp, clever face. Wears a plain, dark uniform, with brass buttons. Tall hat with cockade.

MR. JOHN SMAUKER.

Tall and dignified, with powdered hair. Wears a gorgeous livery.

MR. TUCKLE.

A stout gentleman with vivid crimson livery. Carries cocked hat and high stick.

A GENTLEMAN-IN-ORANGE-PLUSH.

A GENTLEMAN-IN-PURPLE-PLUSH.

A GENTLEMAN-IN-LIGHT-BLUE.

HARRIS (*A Greengrocer*).

Mild, nervous and obsequious. Wears an apron over ordinary suit of clothes.

Period : About 1830.

SCENE.

A small parlour behind a greengrocer's shop. Door R. Window L. Fireplace back. Table set for dinner L. C. Chairs, etc.

Enter Sam Weller.

SAM—(*looking about him*) Hullo! no one 'ere. I suppose this is the place alright. Better have another look at this 'ere invitation!

(Takes letter from his pocket.)

It's wrote on gilt-edged paper, so it must be alright. (*Reading.*) "A select company of the Bath Footmen presents their compliments to Mr. Weller, and requests the pleasure of his company this evening to a friendly swarry, consisting of a boiled leg of mutton with the usual trimmings, at 5 Rupert Street, Bath. The swarry to be on the table at half-past nine o'clock punctually. Mr. John Smauker, the gentleman who had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Weller a few days since, begs to enclose Mr. Weller the herewith invitation."

SAM—(*hitching his hat to the back of his head*) Well, this is comin' it a bit powerful, this is. I never heerd a biled leg o' mutton called a swarry afore. I wonder what they'd call a roast one.

Enter Harris.



HARRIS—(*nervously*) Good-evening, sir, good-evening.

SAM—Hullo, young feller. I say, are you expectin' Mr. John Smauker 'ere this evenin'?

HARRIS—Yes, sir, yes. I see'd Mr. Smauker just now, when I was in the shop, a-comin' down the street. Here he is, sir.

Enter Mr. John Smauker.

HARRIS—(*obsequiously*) Good-evening, Mr. Smauker. I 'ope I sees you well, sir.

SMAUKER—(*condescendingly*) Good-evening, Harris. (*Gracefully removes his hat and hands it to the bowing Harris.*) Ah! Mr. Weller, how do you do, sir.

SAM—Why, reasonably convalescent. How do you find yourself, my dear feller?

SMAUKER—Only so so.

SAM—Ah, you've been a-workin' too hard. I was fearful you would; it won't do, you know; you must not give way to that 'ere uncom-promisin' spirit o' your'n.

SMAUKER—It's not so much that, Mr. Weller, as bad wine. I'm afraid I've been dissipating—(*To Harris*) You may go, Harris.

HARRIS—Yes, Mr. Smauker. Thank you, sir. *Exit.*

SAM—Ah, dissipatin' is it? That's a very bad complaint, that.

SMAUKER—And yet look at the temptation, Mr. Weller, when one is plunged into the very vortex of society?

SAM—Ah, dreadful indeed!

SMAUKER—But it's always the way. If your destiny leads you into public life, you must expect to

be subjected to temptations which other people is free from, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Precisely what my uncle said, ven *he* went into the public line, and wery right the old gen'lm'n wos, for he drank hisself to death in somethin' less than a quarter.

(Mr. Smauker draws himself up and looks highly indignant at the parallel between himself and the deceased gentleman. Is about to make a remark upon the subject but thinks better of it on observing Sam's stolid expression.)

SMAUKER—Have you drunk the waters, Mr. Weller?

SAM—Only once, and I thought they was particklery unpleasant.

SMAUKER—Ah, you disliked the killibeate taste, perhaps?

SAM—Well, I don't know much about that 'ere. I thought they'd a wery strong flavour o' warm flat irons.

SMAUKER—*(contemptuously)* That *is* the killibeate, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Well, if it is, it's a wery inexpressive word, that's all. It may be, but I ain't much in the chimicle line myself, so I can't say.

(Digs his hands into his pockets and begins to whistle loudly.)

SMAUKER—*(deeply shocked—aside)* Dear me! what a very unpolished person, this is. Supposing someone were to come. *(To Sam)* They—they will soon be here, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Will they? *(continues whistling.)*

SMAUKER—(*agonised*) Yes, but don't be alarmed, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Oh, no! (*Whistles louder than ever.*)

SMAUKER—(*hurriedly*) You'll see some very handsome uniforms, Mr. Weller, and perhaps you may find some of the gentlemen rather high at first, but they'll soon come round, you know.

SAM—(*gratefully*) That's wery kind on 'em.

SMAUKER—(*greatly relieved at the cessation of the whistling.*) And you know, as a stranger, perhaps they'll be rather hard on you at first.

SAM—They won't be wery cruel, will they?

SMAUKER—(*taking a pinch of snuff*) No, no. There are some funny dogs among us, and you mustn't mind 'em.

SAM—I'll try and bear up agin such a regular knock down o' talent.

SMAUKER—(*with an air of sublime protection*) That's right. I'll stand by you. (*Glancing at Sam's headgear*) Perhaps you'd like to take your hat off, Mr. Weller? I'll show you where to leave it.

SAM—Thanks, old fellow.

(*Mr. Smauker crosses the door. Sam follows with a broad grin, and manifests other expressions of extreme enjoyment. Mr. Smauker throws open door, and turns round. Sam instantly assumes a stolid countenance.*)

SMAUKER—If you go up that passage you will see a flight of stairs. Will you have the goodness to place it upon them.

SAM—I will. Thank you wery much.

Exit, and collides with Mr. Tuckle who is about to enter.

Enter Mr. Tuckle. He carries a cocked-hat and a high stick.

TUCKLE—Ah, Smauker, my boy, your fin.

(They shake hands.)

SMAUKER—I am chawmed to see you looking so well.

TUCKLE—*(crossing to fire and spreading himself out with his back towards it)* Well, they tell me I'm looking pretty blooming, and it's a wonder too. I've been following our old woman about, two hours a day, for the last fortnight ; and if a constant contemplation of the manner in which she hooks-and-eyes that infernal lavender-coloured old gown of hers behind isn't enough to throw anybody into a low state of despondency for life, then stop my quarter's salary.

(Smauker laughs very heartily.)

Enter Sam.

TUCKLE—Why, who's this, Smauker, my boy ?

SMAUKER—Oh, this is my friend, Mr. Weller.

TUCKLE—*(with a nod)* Sorry to keep the fire off you, Weller. Hope you're not cold, Weller.

SAM—Not by no means, Blazes *(Mr. Tuckle starts.)*

It 'ud be a verry chilly subject as felt cold wen you stood opposit. You'd save coals, you would, if they was to put you behind the fender in the waitin' room at a public office.

Mr. Tuckle looks majestic—then forces a laugh and edges away from the fire as a



Gentleman in Orange Plush and a Gentleman in Purple Cloth enter.

SMAUKER—Ah, Whiffers, delighted to see you.

THE GENTLEMAN IN ORANGE PLUSH—Thanks, Smauker, thanks.

THE GENTLEMAN IN PURPLE CLOTH—Who's your friend, Smauker?

SMAUKER—This is Mr. Weller, gentlemen.

(Sam bows low.)

You may not believe it, gentlemen, but this is Mr. Weller's first visit to Bath.

ALL—What? Never in Bath! Impossible!

The G. in O. P.—Surely, Mr. Weller is a wag. I cannot believe it.

SAM—Well, old fellow, since seein' you I can hardly believe it myself.

(The G. in O. P. looks doubtful.)

Enter Harris, carrying a dish of boiled mutton with caper sauce, turnips and potatoes. He places it upon table, fetches plates from the fender, stations himself behind chair at head of table, and puts on a pair of wash leather gloves.

TUCKLE—Gentlemen, take your places.

(They stalk to table, Sam mimicking them, and seat themselves.)

TUCKLE—*(in a commanding tone)* Harris!

HARRIS—Sir?

TUCKLE—Have you got your gloves on?

HARRIS—Yes, sir.

TUCKLE—Then take the kiver off.

HARRIS—Yes, sir.

(Does so with great humility, but accidentally gapes.)

TUCKLE—*(fiercely)* What do you mean by that, sir?

HARRIS—*(apologetically)* I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't mean to do it, sir. I was up very late last night, sir.

TUCKLE—*(impressively)* I tell you what my opinion of you is, Harris: you're a vulgar beast.

HARRIS—I hope you won't be severe on me, gentlemen. I'm very much obliged to you indeed, gentlemen, for your patronage, and also for your recommendations whenever additional assistance in waiting is required. I hope, gentlemen, I give satisfaction.

TUCKLE—No, you don't, sir; very far from it.

The G. in O. P.—We consider you an inattentive raskel.

The G. in P. C.—And a low thief.

SMAUKER—And an irreclaimable blaygaird.

SAM—And I considers you a desprate villin. Get along out and bring in a bowl of punch.

ALL—Hear, hear! Bravo, Mr. Weller, bravo!

SAM—Wery obliged for your good opinion, gen'lemen. But hello, who's this?

Enter a Gentleman in Blue.

TUCKLE—Too late! too late! It's against the rules, you know.

The G. in B.—No, no, positively I couldn't help it. I appeal to the company. An affair of gallantry now, an appointment at the theavter.

SMAUKER—Oh, that indeed!

The G. in B.—*taking his seat and receiving some mutton from Mr. Tuckle*) Yes, really now, I couldn't help it. I made a promese to fetch our youngest daughter at half-past ten, and she is such an uncaumonly fine gal that I raly hadn't the 'art to disappoint her. No offence to the present company, sir; but a petticoat, sir, is irrevokable.

TUCKLE—*(knowingly)* I begin to suspect there's something in that quarter. I've remarked, once or twice, that she leans very heavy on your shoulder when she gets in and out of the carriage.

The G. in B.—Raly, raly, Tuckle, you shouldn't. It's not fair. I may have said to one or two friends that she was a very divine creechure, and had refused one or two offers without any hobvous cause, but no, no, no, indeed, Tuckle, before strangers too, *(indicating Sam)* it's not right; you shouldn't. Delicacy, my dear friend, delicacy.

(He resumes his attack upon the mutton.)

Enter Harris with a steaming bowl of punch, which he sets upon table before Sam.

HARRIS—*(rubbing his hands together)* 'Ave you any other orders, gen'l'men? *(apologetically)* The publics close in 'arf-an-hour.

TUCKLE—Bring me some cold s'rub.

The G. in O. P.—And me some gin and water, sweet.

SMAUKER—Brandy, warm, for me.

The G. in P. C.—I'll 'ave some rum.

The G. in B.—So'll I.

HARRIS—Thank you, gen'l'men.

Exit.

SAM—Come, gen'l'men, help yourselves, and don't stint the liquor.

(He ladles some into a glass and lifts it to the Gentleman in Blue.)

SAM—Your health, sir! I liked your conversation; it was very pretty.

The G. in B.—*(also taking punch)* Thank you, sir. I don't know your name, sir, but I like your looks, and hope we may be better acquainted.

SAM—You're very good. My name's Weller, sir—Samivel Weller.

The G. in B.—Delighted to hear it, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Ah, what a lucky feller you are!

The G. in B.—How do you mean?

SAM—That 'ere young lady, she knows wot's wot, she does. Ah! I see. *(Digs him in the ribs.)*

The G. in B.—I'm afraid you're a cunning fellow, Mr. Weller.

SAM—No, no, I leave all that 'ere to you. It's a great deal more in your way than mine, as the gen'l'man on the right side of the garden wall said to the man on the wrong 'un, ven the mad bull was a-comin' up the lane.

THE G. IN B.—Well, well, Mr. Weller, I think she has remarked my air and manner.

SAM—I should think she couldn't very well be off o' that.

SMAUKER—Have you any little thing o' that kind in hand, Mr. Weller?

SAM—Not exactly! There's no daughters at my place, else o' course I should ha' made up to vun on 'em. As it is, I might take up with a female markis if she made wery fierce love to me. Not else.

THE G. IN O. P.—Of course not, Mr. Weller. One can't be troubled, you know; and *we* know, we men of the world, Mr. Weller, that a good uniform must work its way with the women, sooner or later. In fact, that's the only thing, between you and me, that makes service worth entering into.

SAM—Just so. That's it, o' course.

THE G. IN B.—Gentlemen, I'll give you the ladies; come.

SAM—Hear, hear, the young missuses.

*(Great indignation on the part of everyone.
Cries of "Order, order," and "Chair, chair.")*

TUCKLE—*(sternly)* We cannot allow that, Mr. Weller.

SAM *(impeturbably)* What's that?

TUCKLE—The use of that word, sir. It was unparliamentary.

SAM—What word was that 'ere?

SMAUKER—Missuses, sir, we don't recognise sich distinctions here.

SAM—Oh, wery good, then I'll amend the obserwashun, and call 'em dear creechures, if Blazes will allow me. Gen'l'men, the ladies,

(They all drink amid cries of "The ladies.")
Enter Harris with the spirits which he places
on table and exit.

THE G. IN THE P. C.—*(rising)* I feel a great delicacy in comin' for'ard, but I do feel myself bound, gentlemen, to make known an afflicting circumstance which has happened, I may say, within the very soap of my every-day contemplation. Gentlemen, our friend, Mr. Whiffers *(indicating the G. in O. P.)*, has resigned. *(General consternation).*

THE G. IN P. C.—You may well be sapparised, gentlemen. I will not wenchure to state the reasons of this irrepairabel loss to the service, but will beg Mr. Whiffers to state 'em himself. *(Sits down).*

THE G. IN O. P.—*(rising)* I could have wished, gentlemen, to 'ave spared the company the painful and disgustin' detail on which I am about to enter, but as an explanation has been demawnded of me, I've no hother halternative but to state it 'ere. Gentlemen, this very day I was required to eat cold meat.

(Terrific indignation. Cries of "Shame," "Scandalous," "Outrageous," "Disgraceful.")

SAM—Disgustin', I calls it. I hope you gave it to 'em, old feller.

THE G. IN O. P.—I fear, gentlemen, some of the blame attaching to this outrage must be laid at my own door,

(Cries of "No," "No," "Impossible.")

THE G. IN O. P.—Yes, gentlemen, I fear it is so. I attribute it to my forbearing and accommodating disposition. I distinctly remember once having consented to eat salt butter, and moreover on an occasion of sudden sickness I so far forgot myself as to carry a coal-scuttle up to the second floor. I trust I have not lowered myself in the opinion of those present by this frank confession of my faults. If I have, I can only hope that the manner in which I have resented this last outrage will have reinstated me in your good opinion. *(He sits down amid tremendous applause.)*

TUCKLE—Gentlemen, my feelin's is almost too much for me, but I rise and awsk you to drink the 'ealth of our friend, Mr. Whiffers, who 'as took up such a noble stand against tyranny.

(Cries of "Hear," "Hear." They all drink.)

THE G. IN O. P.—*(rising)* I thank you all, gentlemen, from the bottom of my 'art, and I should like to propose the 'ealth of our visitor 'ere *(indicating Sam.)* I 'ave not the pleasure of intimate acquaintance with Mr. Weller, but 'is bein' a friend of Mr. Smauker is sufficient recommendation to any society whatever or wherever. I should 'ave proposed Mr. Weller's 'ealth with all honours if we was a-drinkin' wine, but we are not; we are taking spirits, and it would be inconvenient to empty a glass

to hevery toast, so I therefore proposes that honours be understood.

(Murmurs of assent.)

SAM—*(helping himself to more punch)* Wery much obliged to you, old fellers, for this here compliment, which comin' from sich a quarter is wery overwelmin'. I only hope you'll all take care o' yourselves, and not compromise nothin' o' your dignity, wich is a wery charmin' thing to see wen one is out a-walkin', and 'as always made me wery happy to look at, ever since I was a boy about half as high as my wery respectable friend, Blazes, there. As to the wictim of oppression in the suit o' brimstone, all I can say of him is, that I hope he'll get jist as good a berth as he deserves, in wich case it's wery little cold swarry as ever he'll be troubled with agin.

(He sits down amid tumultuous applause.)

SMAUKER—*(rising)* Well, I must be moving.

SAM—Why, you don't mean to say you're a-goin', old feller?

SMAUKER—I must indeed, I promised Bantam.

SAM—Oh, wery well, that's another thing. P'raps he'd resign if you disappointed him.

SMAUKER—Good-night, gentlemen! Good-night, Mr. Weller.

SAM—Good-night, and don't you go a-workin' too 'ard.

Exit Mr. John Smauker,

TUCKLE—(*rising*) Well, Mr. Weller, we're delighted to have welcomed you to Bath.

SAM—What, Blazes, you ain't a-going?

TUCKLE—Yes, I am.

SAM—What, and you too? (*To Gentleman in Blue.*)

G. in B.—Yes, my dear fellow; affair of honour, you know.

SAM—Ah, then I mustn't detain you.

TUCKLE—(*taking up his stick and cocked hat*) Where's that Harris? (*Raps on floor with stick.*) Harris! Harris, come 'ere, you vulgar rascal.

Enter Harris.

TUCKLE—Harris, the door! Mr. Weller, good-night!

Harris opens door and stands bowing. Mr. Tuckle puts on his hat and makes a dignified exit, followed by the Gentleman-in-Blue, the Gentleman in Orange Plush, and the Gentleman in Purple Cloth. Sam mimicks their walk as far as door, then returns to table and drops into chair and bursts into roar of laughter.

SAM—(*perceiving Harris staring at him.*) Hullo! (*with mock severity*) You're a desp'rit willin, ain't you? What do you mean by it?

HARRIS—(*obsequiously*) I—I—am—very—sorry, sir—
I 'ave—tried—to—give—satisfaction—sir.

SAM—(*ladling out two glasses of punch*) Come 'ere!

HARRIS—I—I—I—beg—your—pardon—sir."

SAM—Come 'ere at vunce, sir.

HARRIS—(*timidly approaching*) I—I don't understand.

SAM—(*jumping up and forcing him into a chair*) Sit down, old feller, and we'll make a night of it.

HARRIS—Really, sir, I—I—.

(*Sam hands him a glass of punch and digs him in ribs. Harris looks at him flabbergasted.*)

CURTAIN.

N.B.—*When the curtain rises again Harris is partaking of punch, and joining Sam in revelry quite at his ease.*

MRS. NICKLEBY AND THE GENTLEMAN
NEXT DOOR

FROM

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

CHARACTERS.

Mrs. NICKLEBY (*A widow of about 50.*)

KATE (*Her daughter.*)

AN OLD MAD GENTLEMAN.

A KEEPER.

Period: About 1836.

SCENE.

The Garden of Nicholas Nickleby's cottage at Bow. Wall and summer-house at back covered with creepers, flowers, etc. The summer-house is quite open to view and has a rustic seat at back.

Enter Mrs. Nickleby and Kate Nickleby. Both carry work-boxes. They sit in summer-house.

Mrs. NICKLEBY—(*threading her needle*) Kate, my dear, I don't know how it is, but a fine, warm, summer day like this, with the birds singing in every direction, always puts me in mind of roast pig with sage and onion sauce and made gravy.

KATE—That's a curious association of ideas, is it not, mamma?

Mrs. N.—Upon my word, my dear, I don't know. Roast pig; let me see. On the day five weeks after you were christened we had a roast—no, that couldn't have been a pig, because I recollect there were a pair of them to carve, and your poor papa and I could never have thought of sitting down to two pigs—they must have been partridges. Roast pig. I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your papa could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say



KATE NICKLEBY

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they always put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions. He had a horror of little babies, too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family, and had a natural dislike to the subject. It's very odd now what can have put that into my head. I recollect dining off one at Mrs. Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coach-maker's, where the tipsy man fell through the cellar-flap of an empty house nearly a week before quarter-day, and wasn't found till the new tenant went in, and we had roast pig there. It must be that I think that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully; but I think it must be that. Indeed, I'm sure it must. Shouldn't you say so, my dear?

KATE—(*cheerfully*) I should say there was not a doubt about it, mamma.

Mrs. N.—(*with great gravity*) No, but do you think so, Kate? If you don't, say so at once, you know, because it's just as well to be correct, particularly on a point of this kind, which is very curious and worth settling while one thinks about it.

KATE—(*laughing*) Yes, mamma, I am really quite convinced.

Pause. They work.

Mrs. N.—(*looking round*) Well, I will say that there never was such a good creature as Smike. Upon my word, the pains he has taken putting this little arbour to rights, and training the sweetest flowers about it, are beyond anything I could have—(*breaking off*) I wish though he wouldn't put all the gravel on your side, Kate, my dear, and leave nothing but the mould for me.

KATE—Dear mamma, take this seat—do—

Mrs. N.—No, indeed, my dear, I shall keep my own side (*still looking round*). Well! I declare if he hasn't been and got, from somewhere or other, a couple of roots of those flowers that I said I was so fond of the other night and asked you if you were not—no, no, that you said you were so fond of and asked me if I wasn't—it's the same thing. (*Again looking about her.*) I don't see any of them on my side, but I suppose they grow best near the gravel. You may depend upon it they do, Kate, and that's the reason they are all near you.

KATE—(*breaking in and bending low over her work*) Mamma, before you were married—

Mrs. N.—Dear me, Kate, what in the name of goodness graciousness makes you fly off to the time before I was married? You don't seem to take the slightest interest in the garden.

KATE—Oh, mamma, you know I do!

Mrs. N.—Well then, my dear, why don't you praise

the neatness and prettiness with which it is kept. How odd you are, Kate! But what were you going to say?

KATE—I was going to ask, mamma, before you were married, had you many suitors?

Mrs. N.—(*with smile of wonderful complacency*) Suitors, my dear! First and last, Kate, I must have had a dozen at least!

KATE—(*remonstrating*) O mamma!

Mrs. N.—I had indeed, my dear, not including your poor papa, or a young gentleman who used to go at that time to some dancing school, and who would send gold watches and bracelets to our house in gilt-edged paper (which were always returned), 'and who afterwards unfortunately went out to Botany Bay in a cadet ship—a convict ship, I mean—and escaped into the bush and killed sheep (I don't know how they got there), and was going to be hung, only he accidentally choked himself and the government pardoned him. There was young Lukin (*checking off names on her fingers*) Mogley—Tipslark—Calbery—Smifser—

(*A loud voice on the other side of wall.*) Hem!

Both start violently.

KATE—(*rising*) Mamma, what was that?

Mrs. N.—Upon my word, my dear, unless it was the gentleman belonging to the next house, I don't know what it could possibly—

THE VOICE—(*in a kind of bellow*) A—heh!

Mrs. N.—(*rising and laying her hand on Kate*) I understand it now, my dear, don't be alarmed, it's not directed to you.

KATE—(*surprised*) What do you mean, mamma?

Mrs. N.—(*glancing towards wall*) Don't be flurried, my dear, for you see I'm not, and if it would be excusable in anybody to be flurried it certainly would—under the circumstances—be excusable in me, but I am not, Kate, not at all.

KATE—It seemed designed to attract our attention.

Mrs. N.—(*blandly*) It is designed to attract our attention, my dear, at least to attract the attention of one of us. Hem! you need not be at all uneasy, my dear!

(*Violent shouting, scuffling, whooping and kicking is heard to proceed from further side of wall.*)

KATE—Mamma, mamma, pray come in.

(*A large cucumber flies over wall and falls at Mrs. Nickleby's feet. This is followed by a fine vegetable marrow and a shower of onions, radishes, and other vegetables.*)

KATE—Oh come, come, why do you stop?

Mrs. N.—Kate, my dear, how can you be so foolish? I am ashamed of you. How can you expect—Oh! (*Starts as an old black velvet cap appears above wall. By slow degrees the head of an old man appears. He has very wild, wide open, rolling eyes and leers languishing'y.*)

KATE—(*really alarmed*) Come in, mamma, oh, come in.



MRS. NICKLEBY

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(Mrs. Nickleby still draws back.)

OLD MAD GENTLEMAN—*(who has now climbed up a ladder and is standing balanced on top of it)*
Queen of my soul, this goblet sip.

Mrs. N.—Nonsense, sir. *(To Kate who pulls her by the arm).* Kate, my love, pray be quiet.

O. M. G.—*(his hand upon heart)* Won't you sip the goblet? Oh, do sip the goblet.

Mrs. N.—I shall not consent to do anything of the kind, sir. Pray, begone.

O. M. G.—Why is it that beauty is always obdurate even when admiration is as honourable and respectful as mine? *(he kisses his hand gallantly).* Is it owing to the bees, who, when the honey season is over and they are supposed to have been killed with brimstone, in reality fly to Barbary, and lull the captive Moors to sleep with their drowsy song? Or is it in consequence of the statue at Charing Cross having been lately seen, on the Stock Exchange at midnight, walking arm-in-arm with the Pump from Aldgate, in a riding habit?

KATE—Mamma, do you hear him?

Mrs. N.—Hush, my dear, he is very polite, and I think that was a quotation from the poets. Pray don't worry me—you'll pinch me black and blue. Go away, sir!

O. M. G.—Quite away? Oh, quite away?
(He leaps from wall to ground.)

Mrs. N.—*(emphatically)* Yes, certainly. You have no business here. This is private property, sir, you ought to know that.

O. M. G.—(*laying finger on nose*) I do know that this is a sacred and enchanted spot, where the most divine charms, (*he bows low*) waft mellifluousness over the neighbours' gardens, and force the fruit and vegetables into premature existence. But will you permit me, fairest creature, to ask you one question, in the absence of the planet Venus, who has gone on business to the Horse Guards, and would otherwise—jealous of your superior charms—interpose between us?

Mrs. N.—Kate, it's very awkward, positively. I really don't know what to say to the gentleman. One ought to be civil, you know.

KATE—Don't say a word to him, dear, but let us run away as fast as we can, and shut ourselves up till Nicholas comes home.

(*Mrs. N. looks contemptuously at Kate, then turns to O. M. G.*)

Mrs. N.—If you will conduct yourself, sir, like the gentleman I should imagine you to be, from your language and—and—appearance. (*To Kate aside*) Quite the counterpart of your grandpapa, Kate, my dear, in his best days. (*To O. M. G.*) If you will put your question to me in plain words, I will answer it.

(*O. M. G. pulls off his cap, bows and kisses his fingers, and looks round in every direction.*)

O. M. G.—The question is, are you a princess?

Mrs. N.—(*surprised*) You are mocking me, sir.

O. M. G.—No, but are you?

Mrs. N.—You know I am not.

O. M. G.—Then are you any relation to the Archbishop of Canterbury or to the Pope of Rome? or to the Speaker of the House of Commons? Forgive me if I am wrong, but I was told you were niece to the Commissioner for Paving, and daughter-in-law to the Lord Mayor, and Court of Common Council, which would account for your relationship to all three.

Mrs. N.—(*warmly*) Whoever has spread such reports, sir, has taken great liberties with my name, and one which I am sure my son Nicholas, if he was aware of it, would not allow for an instant. Niece to the Commissioner for Paving! The idea!

KATE—Pray, mamma, come away!

Mrs. N. (*angrily*) Nonsense, Kate; 'but that's just the way. If they had said I was niece to a piping bullfinch, what would you care! (*whimpering*.) But I get no sympathy. I don't expect it, that's one thing!

O. M. G.—Tears! catch the crystal globules—catch 'em—bottle 'em up—label 'em "best quality," and stow 'em away in the fourteen bin with a bar of iron on top to keep the thunder off!
(*He issues these orders to imaginary attendants.*)

O. M. G.—Beautiful madam, if I have made any mistake with regard to your family or connections, I humbly beseech you to pardon me. If I supposed you to be related to the Foreign Powers or Native Boards, it is

because you have a manner, a carriage, a dignity which you will excuse my saying that none but yourself, with the single exception perhaps of the Tragic Muse, when playing extemporaneously on the barrel organ before the East India Company, can parallel.

Mrs. N.—Really, Kate, my love.

O. M. G.—(*waving hand negligently*) I have estates, ma'am, jewels, light-houses, fish-ponds, a whalery of my own in the North Sea, and several oyster beds of great profit in the Pacific Ocean. If you will have the kindness to step down to the Royal Exchange, and to take the cocked hat off the stoutest beadle's head, you will find my card in the lining of the crown, wrapped up in a piece of blue paper. My walking stick is to be seen on application to the chaplain of the House of Commons, who is strictly forbidden to take any money for showing it. I have enemies about me, ma'am, who wish to secure my property. Love, rapture and bliss! Be mine be mine!

Mrs. N.—Kate, my dear, I have hardly the power to speak, but it is necessary for the happiness of all parties that this matter should be set at rest for ever.

KATE—Surely there is no necessity for you to say one word, mamma.

Mrs. N.—You will allow me, my dear, if you please, to judge for myself.

O. M. G.—Be mine, be mine, Gog and Magog, be mine, be mine.

Mrs. N.—(*to O. M. G.*) It is sufficient for me to say and I'm sure you'll see the propriety of taking an answer and going away, that I have made up my mind to remain a widow and to devote myself to my children. You may not suppose I am the mother of two children, indeed many have doubted it, but it is the case, and they are both grown up. We shall be very glad to have you for a neighbour, very glad, but in any other character it's quite impossible quite. As to my being young enough to marry again, that perhaps may be so, or it may not be, but I couldn't think of it for an instant. I said I never would, and I never will. It's a very painful thing to have to reject proposals, but at the same time this is the answer I determined long ago to make, and this is the answer I shall always give.

O. M. G.—Be mine—be mine—(*utters a loud bellow.*)

(*The figure of a coarse, squat man appears upon ladder against wall.*)

O. M. G.—Oh, it's you, is it?

KEEPER—(*gruffly*) Yes, it's me.

O. M. G.—How's the Emperor of Tartary?

KEEPER—He's much the same as usual. No better and no worse!

O. M. G.—The young Prince of China. Is he

reconciled to his father-in-law, the great potato salesman?

KEEPER—No, and he says he never will be.

O. M. G.—If that's the case, perhaps I'd better come over.

KEEPER—Well, I think you had, per'aps.

(He climbs to top of wall, pulls up ladder, lets it down into garden. O. M. G. ascends it, stands upon top of wall, removes his cap, puts it in his pocket, and strikes up a position upon one leg.)

O. M. G.—Be mine, my love, my life—my bride—be mine, and all is gas and gaiters.

(He loses his balance and disappears into adjoining garden.)

KEEPER—*(pulling up ladder again)* Beg pardon, ladies, has he been making love to either of you?

KATE—Yes.

KEEPER—*(pulling handkerchief out of hat and wiping his face)* Ah! he always will, you know. Nothing will prevent him making love.

KATE—I need not ask you if he's out of his mind, poor creature.

KEEPER—*(looking into his hat, throwing handkerchief in and putting it on again)* Why no, that's plain, that is.

KATE—Has he been long so?

KEEPER—A long while.

KATE—Is there any hope for him?



AN OLD MAD GENTLEMAN

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KEEPER—Not a bit, and don't deserve to be. He's a deal pleasanter without his senses than he was with 'em. He was the cruellest, wickedest, out and outerest old flint that ever drewed breath.

KATE—Indeed.

KEEPER—By George! I never come across such a vagabond, and my mate says the same. Broke his poor wife's heart, turned his daughters out of doors, drove his sons into the streets. It was a blessing he went mad at last, through evil tempers and covetousness and selfishness and guzzling and drinking, or he'd have drove many others so. Hope for him, the old rip! There isn't too much hope going, but I'll bet a crown that what there is, is saved for more deserving chaps than him, anyhow.

(He touches his hat, descends the ladder and disappears.)

KATE—Poor creature!

Mrs. N.—*(indignantly)* Ah! poor indeed! It's shameful that such things should be allowed. Shameful.

KATE—But how can they be helped, mamma. The infirmities of nature—

Mrs. N.—Nature! What! Do you suppose this poor gentleman is out of his mind?

KATE—Can anybody who sees him entertain any other opinion, mamma?

Mrs. N.—*(emphatically)* Why then, I just tell you this, Kate, that he is nothing of the kind, and

I am surprised you can be so imposed upon. It's some plot of these people to possess themselves of his property, didn't he say so himself? He may be odd and flighty, perhaps, but many of us are that ; but downright mad, and express himself as he does, respectfully, and in quite poetical language, and making offers with so much thought and care, and prudence ; not as if he ran into the streets and went down upon his knees to the first chit of a girl he met, as a madman would ! No, no, Kate, there's a great deal too much method in his madness ; depend upon that, my dear.

(Exit shaking her head sagely.)

CURTAIN.

MR. JONAS CHUZZLEWIT PROPOSES
MARRIAGE

FROM

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

CHARACTERS.

MR. SETH PECKSNIFF.

A sleek, but not corpulent man. He is clean-shaven, and there is a general air of prosperity and extreme morality about his appearance. His hair, which is just touched with grey, is brushed off his forehead and stands bolt upright. He wears a plain black suit, and a low, white cravat, and shows a great deal of a very moral looking throat. A double eyeglass dangles round his neck. His manner is soft and oily.

MISS CHARITY PECKSNIFF (*His eldest daughter*).

Rather tall and angular. She has sharp features, and her nose inclines to a frosty and scraped appearance. Her manner is acid.

MERCY PECKSNIFF (*His youngest daughter*).

Very skittish and playful. She is moderately buxom, and wears her hair in a loosely flowing crop with many curls.

JONAS CHUZZLEWIT (*His cousin*).

Tall and thin. He is a man of about 35, but very old looking for his age. His face is sharpened by the wariness and cunning of his life. His hair is rather thin and his voice harsh. His manner is coarse.

Period: About 1840.

SCENE.

Parlour at Mr. Pecksniff's. Bookshelves and Door R. Window back, in front of which is a writing desk.

Fire is burning in Fireplace L. Cupboard L. Round table L. C. Sofa R. C. Chairs, etc.

Enter Mr. Pecksniff and Jonas Chuzzlewit. They wear travelling coats and carry bags.

MR. PECKSNIFF—Come in, Mr. Jonas, come in. I am delighted to welcome you to my poor roof.
(*Removes his great-coat.*)

JONAS—Good! but I was beginning to think we'd never get under it.

MR. P.—Well, well, but here we are, and moreover, here are lights and a fire.

JONAS—We need 'em.

MR. P.—This is a room, my dear Mr. Jonas, where some talent has been developed, I am pleased to think. We work here. Some architects have been bred in this room—a few, I think. But, tut, tut, I am forgetting my hostly duties—allow me to assist you in removing your coat.

JONAS—Thanks; but I say, Pecksniff, where are your daughters?



SETH PECKSNIFF

[face p. 144



Mr. P.—Impossible to say. Giddy truants! They may be from home, perhaps. Hush, (*putting his finger to lips, and tiptoeing to door, and peeping out*) I propose to give them a little surprise and come upon them unawares, like a clap of thunder.

JONAS—Why, don't they know you're coming?

Mr. P.—No, they think their papa is miles and miles away from them.

JONAS—(*abruptly*) Pecksniff, what do you mean to give your daughters when they marry?

Mr. P.—My dear Mr. Jonas, what a very singular inquiry!

JONAS—Don't you mind whether it is a singular inquiry or a plural one, but answer it, or let it alone. One way or the other.

Mr. P.—Well, my dear friend, it would naturally depend in a great measure upon the kind of husbands they might choose.

JONAS—(*disconcerted*) Oh!

Mr. P.—My standard for the merits I would require in a son-in-law is a high one. Forgive me, my dear Mr. Jonas, if I say that you have spoiled me, and made it a fanciful one, an imaginative one, a prismatically tinged one, if I may be permitted to call it so.

JONAS—What do you mean by that?

Mr. P.—Indeed, my dear young friend, you may well enquire. The heart is not always a royal mint, with patent machinery to work its metal into current coin. Sometimes it throws it out in strange forms, not easily recognised

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as coin at all. But it is sterling gold. It has at least that merit. It is sterling gold.

JONAS—Is it?

Mr. P.—Aye! it is. To be plain with you, Mr. Jonas, if I could find two such sons-in-law as you will one day make to some deserving man, I would—forgetful of myself—bestow upon my daughters portions reaching to the very utmost limit of my means.

JONAS—Humph! But suppose you got one such son-in-law as me, what then?

Mr. P.—Then, well, I know whose husband he would be.

JONAS—(*drily*) Whose?

Mr. P.—(*with emotion*) My eldest girl's, Mr. Jonas. My dear Cherry's: my staff, my scrip, my treasure. A hard struggle, but it is in the nature of things I must one day part with her to a husband. I know it, my dear friend, I am prepared for it.

JONAS—Ecod! you've been prepared for that a pretty long time, I should think.

Mr. P.—Ah! many have sought to bear her from me, all have failed. "I never will give my hand," those were her words, "unless my heart is won." She has not been so happy as she used to be, of late, I don't know why.

JONAS—I suppose you'll have to part with your other daughter, some of these days.

Mr. P.—Probably. Years will tame down the wildness of my foolish bird, and then it will be caged. But Cherry, Mr. Jonas, Cherry!

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JONAS—Oh, ah! Years have made her alright enough. Nobody doubts that. But you haven't answered what I asked you; (*sulkily*) of course you're not obliged to answer it, you're the best judge.

Mr. P.—Well, my dear Mr. Jonas, I think I may say, in confidence, and as a proof of the attachment I bear to you, that, in the event of such a man as you proposing for my daughter's hand, I should endow her with £4,000.

JONAS—£4,000!

Mr. P.—It would sadly pinch and cramp me to do so, but it would be my duty, and my conscience would reward me. But, hush, I hear footsteps, and the sound of Cherry's voice.

(*He conceals himself behind door. Enter Charity Pecksniff, humming a tune to herself. Mr. Pecksniff springs out upon her.*)

Mr. P.—(*playfully*) Boh!

CHERRY—(*with a little scream*) Oh!—oh, it's you, papa. How you frightened me!

Mr. P.—(*embracing her and smoothing her hair*) It was thoughtless of us, Mr. Jonas, very thoughtless. My darling, do you see I am not alone?

CHERRY—(*starting*) Oh, papa! (*Disengages herself and approaches Jonas with downcast eyes*) You are very welcome, sir.

JONAS—(*taking her hand*) Thank you, cousin.

Mr. P.—But my Mercy—where is my Mercy?

CHERRY—Upstairs reading.

Mr. P.—Ah, then I will go and bring her down.

Exit Mr. Pecksniff.

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JONAS—Well, cousin, you never expected to see me, I'll warrant. How do you find yourself by this time?

CHERRY—(*demurely*) Thank you, I am very well.

JONAS—That's right. I say, how's the other one?

CHERRY—I have not heard my sister complain of any indisposition, sir. But perhaps you would like to go upstairs yourself and ask her?

JONAS—No, no, there's no occasion for that, you know. What a cruel girl you are!

CHERRY—(*dropping her eyes*) It's impossible for you to know whether I am cruel or not.

JONAS—Well, perhaps it is! Come and sit down beside me, cousin. (*He seats himself—she does likewise, a little way off*) No, no, not all that way off—sit here, Cousin Charity. (*Indicates the sofa on which he is seated. She obeys.*) I say, did you think I was lost?

CHERRY—I didn't think anything at all about it.

JONAS—Didn't you, though? Did the other one?

CHERRY—My sister never said anything about it to me.

JONAS—Didn't she laugh about it?

CHERRY—No!

JONAS—She's a terrible one to laugh, an't she?

CHERRY—(*stiffly*) She is very lively.

JONAS—Liveliness is a pleasant thing when it don't lead to spending money. An't it?

CHERRY—(*demurely*) Very much so, indeed.

JONAS—(*nudging her with his elbow*) Such liveliness as yours, I mean. I say, cousin, why did you hurry away so quick that morning in London?



CHARITY PECKSNIFF

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CHERRY—I was only amenable to my papa's directions.

JONAS—What a sleek old chap he is! Just like a tom-cat, an't he?

CHERRY—I must trouble you to have the goodness to speak more respectfully of my papa, Mr. Jonas.

JONAS—(*laughing*) Ecod! Cousin Charity, but you are a one.

Enter Mr. Pecksniff and Mercy Pecksniff.

Mr. P.—Here is my Mercy, Mr. Jonas, my little untamed bird.

MERCY—(*to Jonas*) Oh, my goodness me! You here, fright! Well, I'm thankful you won't trouble me much.

JONAS—(*trying to embrace her*) What! you're as lively as ever, are you? Oh! you're a wicked one!

MERCY—(*pushing him away*) There, go along! I'm sure I don't know what I shall ever do if I have to see much of you. Go along, for gracious' sake.

Mr. P.—(*shaking his forefinger at her playfully*) Fie, fie, you silly child. My dear Mr. Jonas, I pray that you will pardon these girlish spirits. Charity, my child, perhaps your cousin will partake of the slight refreshment my humble hospitality can offer.

(Charity goes to cupboard and takes out a bottle of wine, a plate of biscuits, and some glasses.)

Mr. P.—What have we here? (*examining bottle*) Ah! currant wine and captain's biscuits. Let us drink, my dear friend,

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(Draws out cork.)

JONAS—I don't mind if I do, *(helping himself)* I'm plaguy thirsty after that coach ride. *(Drinks and pulls a face—aside)* Ecod! What stuff.

Mr. P.—*(also taking wine)* This, my dear Mr. Jonas, is a mingling, that repays one for much disappointment and vexation. *(Drinks)* Let us be merry. *(He takes a captain's biscuit)* It is a poor heart that never rejoices, and our hearts are not poor. No! *(He munches his biscuit)* But now, *(gulping down his biscuit)* I fear that I must leave you for a while. It is a hard thing to quit so pleasant a party, but I have papers of importance in my study to examine. Therefore, I must ask leave to be excused. My loves, in my absence I beg that you will entertain your cousin.

Exit Mr. Pecksniff, humming a careless strain.

MERCY—Goodness me! I'm not going to stay here and talk to you. Oh, my gracious, the idea. *(Skips towards the door.)*

JONAS—Don't go!

MERCY—*(looking back)* Oh, I daresay! You're very anxious I should stay, aren't you, fright?

JONAS—Yes, I am. Upon my word, I am. I want to speak to you.

MERCY—*(again moving towards door)* Oh, do you, indeed?

JONAS—*(seizing her and bearing her back)* Yes, I do.

MERCY—*(struggling)* Oh, leave me alone, you monster, do.



MERCY PECKSNIFF

[face p. 150

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CHERRY—Mercy, really I wonder at you. There are bounds even to absurdity, my dear.

MERCY—Thank you, my sweet. Much obliged for the advice. Oh!

(Jonas puts an arm round the waist of each and pulls them on to sofa. R. C.)

JONAS—Now, I have got both arms full, haven't I?

MERCY—One of them will be black and blue to-morrow if you don't let me go.

JONAS—*(grinning)* I don't mind your pinching a bit.

MERCY—Then you pinch him for me, Cherry dear.

JONAS—No, no, don't do that, because I want to be serious. I say! Cousin Charity.

CHERRY—*(sharply)* Well! what?

JONAS—I want to have some sober talk, to prevent mistakes, you know, and to put everything upon a pleasant understanding. *(He pauses and clears his throat.)* She'll not believe what I am going to say, will she, Cousin Charity?

CHERRY—Really, Mr. Jonas, I don't know till I hear what it is.

JONAS—Why, you see, I know she'll laugh or pretend to. I know that beforehand. But you can tell her I'm in earnest, cousin, can't you? You'll be honourable, I'm sure. *(He pauses again.)* You see, Cousin Charity, nobody but you can tell her what pains I took to get into her company when you were both in London, because nobody's so well aware of it, you know. Nobody else can tell her how hard I tried to get to know you better, in order that I might get to know her without seeming to

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wish it, can they? I always asked you about her and all that, didn't I, cousin? I know you'll tell her so, if you haven't already, and—and I daresay you have told her, but even if you haven't, it don't much matter, because you'll bear honest witness now, won't you? Cousin Mercy, you've heard what I've been saying. She'll confirm it, every word, she must. Will you have me for your husband? Eh?

(Cherry tears herself free from his arm, starts up with a passionate cry, drops into arm-chair and gives way to violent hysterics.)

JONAS—*(disregarding her, to Mercy)* Well, cousin?

MERCY—*(struggling with him)* Let me go. Let me go to her.

JONAS—Not till you say yes. Will you have me for your husband?

MERCY—No, I won't. I can't bear the sight of you. Besides, I always thought you liked my sister best. We all thought so.

JONAS—*(grinning)* But that wasn't my fault.

MERCY—Yes, it was; you know it was.

JONAS—Well, any trick is fair in love. She may have thought I liked her best, but you didn't.

MERCY—I did.

JONAS—No, you didn't. You never could have thought I liked her best when you were by.

MERCY—There's no accounting for tastes. No, no, I didn't mean that. I don't know what I mean. Let me go. Let me go to her.

JONAS—Say "Yes," and then I will.

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MERCY—If I ever brought myself to say so, it should only be that I might hate and tease you all my life.

JONAS—That's as good as saying it outright. It's a bargain, cousin. We're a pair if ever there was one.

(He kisses her. She slaps his face. Cherry's hysterics grow worse than ever. Mercy breaks away from Jonas and goes to Cherry.)

MERCY—Goodness gracious me, Cherry, what ever's the matter. What are you making all this fuss about?

CHERRY—Go away, go away, don't come near me.

MERCY—Well, my dear, you needn't be silly. It's not my fault if the ogre goes and proposes to me.

CHERRY—*(shrilly)* Ha! Ha! Do you think I care who the creature proposes to. The idea! You may take him—I make you a present of my share.

JONAS—What! I'm a sour grape, am I, cousin?

(This sally increases the violence of Cherry's hysterics—she repels Merry's endeavour to comfort her with great energy.)

Enter Mr. Pecksniff. He shuts the door, sets his back against it, and spreads out his hands in wonder.

MR. P.—Children! Girls! Daughters! What is this?

CHERRY—The wretch! the apostate! the false, mean odious villain has dared to propose to Mercy before my very face,

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MR. P.—Who has proposed to Mercy?

CHERRY—(*pointing to Jonas*) He has. That thing!

MR. P.—Jonas proposed to Mercy? Aye, aye!
Indeed!

CHERRY—(*wildly*) Oh, have you nothing else to say but, “aye, aye,” and “indeed?” Am I to be driven mad?

MR. P.—Oh, fie! For shame! Can the triumph of a sister move you to so terrible a display? My child, I am surprised and hurt to see you so. Mercy, my girl, bless you!

(*Cherry utters a loud shriek, pushes Mr. Pecksniff to one side and rushes from the room.*)

MR. P.—(*recovering his balance, and apostrophising the air.*) Oh, envy, envy, what a passion you are!

(*Turning to Jonas and shaking him fervently by the hand.*) Jonas! the dearest wish of my heart is now fulfilled.

JONAS—Very well! I’m glad to hear it. That’ll do, that’ll do. (*Releases his hand.*) I say, Pecksniff.

MR. P.—My boy! My son!

JONAS—(*digging him in the ribs*) I say, as it ain’t the one you’re so fond of, you must come down with another thousand. It’s worth that to keep your treasure to yourself, you know. Ha! Ha!

(*He bursts into a roar of sardonic laughter. Mr. Pecksniff, speechless, stands gazing at him with mingled surprise and admiration.*)

CURTAIN.





THE FALLING OUT OF MRS. GAMP
AND MRS. PRIG.

FROM

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

CHARACTERS.

MRS. SARAH GAMP.

A fat old woman, with a husky voice and moist eyes, which she frequently turns up, showing the white. She wears a rusty black gown, and a large cap.

MRS. BETSY PRIG.

Of the Gamp build, but not so fat. Her voice is deep and man-like. She wears a shabby black dress, bonnet and shawl.

Period : About 1840.

SCENE.

Mrs. Sarah Gamp's first floor front in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn. It is a small apartment. Door R. Window back. A large bedstead stands at one corner and a chest of drawers in other. Some old gowns depend from the bed-posts. Fireplace L. and chimney-piece on which is an almanack and three profiles. One of Mrs. Gamp herself, in colours; one of Mr. Gamp, deceased, in black; and one supposed to be Mrs. Harris, in bronze. A small cupboard L. of fireplace. Mrs. Gamp's umbrella, a pair of pattens, a pair of bellows and a pap-boat are leaning against wall, R. of fireplace. A kettle is boiling upon the fire. Table and two mahogany elbow-chairs C.

MRS. GAMP *discovered* arranging the tea-table.

MRS. GAMP.—(*placing a dish of pickled salmon upon table*) There! Now, drat you, Betsy, don't be long, for I can't abear to wait, I do assure you. To whatever place I goes, I sticks to this one mortar: I'm easy pleased. It is but little as I wants, but I must have that little of the best, and to the minute when the clock strikes, else we do not part as I could wish, but bearin' malice in our 'earts.

(She takes a pinch of snuff and surveys her completed preparations with satisfaction.)

MRS. G.—I can 'ear someone a-comin' up the stairs now.

Enter Mrs. Betsy Prig.

Mrs. G.—My precious Betsy, how late you are?

Mrs. P.—*(with asperity)* Well, it ain't no fault o' mine if perverse people go off dead when they is least expected, and I tell you, it's quite aggravation enough to be made late when one's dropping for one's tea, without hearing on it again.

Mrs. G.—Well, Betsy, here it is all ready.

Mrs. P.—*(glancing at table)* I know'd she wouldn't have a cowcumber.

Mrs. G.—*(disconcerted and sitting down on bedstead)* Lord bless you, Betsy Prig, your words is true. I quite forgot.

(Mrs. Prig, with air of surly triumph, draws from her pocket a very large lettuce, a handful of mustard and cress, a bunch of radishes, an enormous onion, and a head of celery.)

Mrs. P.—Now, Sairey Gamp, slice it up quick, in plenty of vinegar.

(Mrs. Gamp proceeds to do as she is bid.)

And don't go a-droppin' none o' your snuff in it. In gruel, barley-water, apple-tea, mutton-broth and that, it don't signify. It stimulates a patient. But I don't relish it myself.

Mrs. G.—Why, Betsy Prig, how *can* you talk so?

Mrs. P.—Why, ain't your patients, wotever their diseases is, always a-sneezin' their wery heads off, along of your snuff?

Mrs. G.—(*stopping her preparations*) And wot if they are?

Mrs. P.—Nothing if they are, but don't deny it, Sairah?

Mrs. G.—Who deniges of it?

(*She fixes Mrs. Prig with her eye.*)

Mrs. G.—Who deniges of it, Betsy? (*pause*) Betsy, who deniges of it?

Mrs. P.—(*with an eye on the pickled salmon*) Nobody, if you don't, Sairah.

Mrs. G.—(*mollified and resuming her salad dressing.*) Well then, Betsy, take yer things off, and come along, do.

(*Mrs. Prig removes her bonnet and shawl, and throws them upon the bed, and gives her hair two pulls, one upon the right side and one upon the left. She then seats herself at the table and watches Mrs. Gamp with eagerness as she produces a tea-pot, containing gin, and two wine glasses from the shelf.*)

Mrs. G. (*filling her own glass and passing the tea-pot.*) Betsy, I will now propoge a toast. My frequent pardner, Betsy Prig.

Mrs. P.—(*helping herself*) Which, altering the name to Sairah Gamp, I drink with love and tenderness.
(*They both drink.*)

Mrs. GAMP—(*serving the salmon and salad.*)—Ah! Betsy, if it wasn't for the nerve a little sip of



SARAH GAMP

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liquor gives me, I never could go through with what I sometimes has to do. "Mrs. Harris," I says, at the very last case as I acted in, "Mrs. Harris," I says, "leave the bottle on the chimneypiece and don't ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I feel so disposed, and then I will do what I'm engaged to do, according to the best of my ability."

"Mrs. Gamp," says she in answer, "if ever there was a sober creature to be got at eighteen-pence a day for working people, and three-and-six for gentlefolks, you are that inwallable person."

"Mrs. Harris," I says to her, "don't name the charge, for if I could afford to lay all my fellow creatures out for nothing, I would gladly do it, sich is the love I bears 'em. But what I always says to them as has the management of matters, Mrs. Harris, be they gents or be they ladies, is, don't ask whether I won't take none, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the chimney-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so disposed."

(She attacks her pickled salmon with zest. Mrs. Prig gives a snort and continues her meal. There is a few moments silence while they eat and drink.)

Mrs. P.—*(pushing away her empty plate)* Now, Sairah, joining business with pleasure, wot is this case in which you wants me?

(A moment's pause, while Mrs. Gamp swallows some salmon.)

Mrs. P.—*Is it Mrs. Harris?*

Mrs. G.—No, Betsy Prig, it ain't.

Mrs. P.—*(with a snort)* Well, I'm glad of that, at any rate.

Mrs. G.—*(warmly)* Why should you be glad of that, Betsy. She is unbeknown to you except by hearsay, why should you be glad? If you have anythink to say contrairy to the character of Mrs Harris, which well I knows behind her back, afore her face, or anywhere, is not to be impeaged, out with it, Betsy. *(Tearfully)*. I have know'd that sweetest and best of women ever since afore her first, which Mr. Harris who was dreadful timid, went and stopped his ears in an empty dog-kennel, and never took his hands away or come out once till he was showed the baby. Wen bein' took with fits the doctors collared him and laid him on his back upon the airy stones, and she was to ease her mind, his 'owls was organs. And I have know'd her, Betsy Prig, when he has hurt her feelin' 'art by sayin' of his ninth that it was one too many, if not two, while that dear innocent was cooin' in his face, which thrive it did, though bandy, but I have never know'd as you had occagion to be glad, Betsy, on accounts of Mrs. Harris not requiring you. Require she never will, depend upon it, for her constant word in sickness, is, "Send for Sairey."

(During this address Mrs. Prig has feigned absence of mind, and has helped herself from the teapot without appearing to notice it.)

Mrs. P.—*(coldly)* Well, it ain't her, it seems; who is it then?"

Mrs. G.—*(glancing in a marked manner at the tea-pot.)*
You have heard me mention, Betsy, a person as I took care on at a time as you and I were pardners off and on, in that there fever at the "Bull."

Mrs. P.—Old Snuffey!

Mrs. G.—*(firmly)* Chuffey!

(Mrs. Prig folds her arms, closes one eye offensively, and gives a diabolical laugh.)

Mrs. G.—*(with an air of patronage)* Mr. Chuffey, Betsy is weak in his mind. Excuse me if I makes remark, that he may neither be so weak as people thinks, nor people may not think he is so weak as they pretends, and what I know, I knows, and what you don't, you don't, so do not ask me, Betsy. But Mr. Chuffey's friends has made propojals for his bein' took care on, and has said to me, "Mrs. Gamp, will you undertake it? We couldn't think," they says, "of trusting him to nobody but you, for, Sairey, you are as gold that has passed the furnace. Will you undertake it at your own price, day and night, and by your own self?" "No," I says, "I will not. Do not reckon on it. There is," I says, "but one creetur in the world as I would undertake on such terms,

and her name is Harris. But," I says, "I am acquainted with a friend, whose name is Betsy Prig, that I can recommend, and will assist me. Betsy," I says, "is always to be trusted under me, and will be guided as I could desire."

(Mrs. Prig, without any abatement of her offensive manner, again feigns absence of mind and stretches out her hand to the tea-pot.)

Mrs. G.—*(stopping Mrs. Prig's hand with her own)*
No, Betsy, drink fair, whatever you do.

(Mrs. Prig, baffled, throws herself back in her chair, closing the same eye more emphatically, and folding her arms still tighter, suffers her head to roll slowly from side to side, and surveys Mrs. Gamp with a contemptuous smile.)

Mrs. G.—Mrs. Harris, Betsy—

Mrs. P.—Bother Mrs. Harris.

(Mrs. Gamp starts with amazement.)

Mrs. P.—*(emphatically)* I don't believe there's no sich a person !

(She leans forwards and snaps her fingers three times, each time nearer to Mrs. Gamp's face, who sits for some time with uplifted eyes and open mouth, smitten dumb with the shock.)

Mrs. Prig then rises and puts on her bonnet and shawl.)

Mrs. G.—*(rising)* What! you bage creetur, have I know'd Mrs. Harris five and thirty year, to be told at last that there ain't no sich a person



BETSY PRIG

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livin'! Have I stood her friend in all her troubles, great and small, for it to come at last to such an end as this, with her own sweet picter hanging up afore you all the time, to shame your Bragian words! But well you mayn't believe there's not a creetur, for she wouldn't demean herself to look at you, and often has she said, when I have made mention of your name, which, to my sinful sorrow I have done, "What, Sairey Gamp, debage yourself to *her*!" Go along with you!

Mrs. P.—(*standing still*) I'm a-going, ma'am, ain't I?

Mrs. G.—You had better, ma'am.

Mrs. P.—Do you know who you're talking to, ma'am?

Mrs. G.—(*surveying her scornfully*) Aperiently to Betsy Prig. Aperiently so. I know her, no one better. Betsy Prig, Betsey Prig, what I have took from you this blessed night no mortal creetur knows. If you had abuged me bein' in liquor, which I thought I smelt w'en you come in, but could not believe, not bein' used myself, I could 'ave bore it with a thankful 'art. But the words you've spoke of Mrs. Harris, lambs could not forgive. No, Betsy, nor worms forget. Go along with you.

Mrs. P.—(*contemptuously*) And you was a-going to take me under you. You was, was you? Oh, how kind! (*with a sudden ferocity*) Why, deuce take your imperence, what do you mean?

Mrs. G.—Go along with you. I blush for you.

Mrs. P.—You had better blush a little for yourself while you are about it. You and your Chuffey! What, the old creetur isn't mad enough, isn't he? Aha!

Mrs. G.—He'd very soon be mad enough if you had anything to do with him.

Mrs. P.—(*triumphantly*) And that's what I was wanted for, is it? Yes! But you'll find yourself deceived. I won't go near him. We shall see how you get on without me. I won't have nothink to do with him.

Mrs. G.—You never spoke a truer word than that. Go along with you.

Mrs. Prig snorts and makes a violent exit.

Mrs. G.—(*sinking into chair*) Oh, Betsy Prig, what wickedness you've shown this night, but never shall you darken Sairey's doors again, you twining serpiant.

CURTAIN.

NOTE.—*When the curtain rises again Mrs. Gamp is in a state of semi-intoxicated slumber.*

Mrs. G.—(*murmuring*) Mrs. Harris—Bottle on the chimney piece—Let me put my lips to it—when I'm so disposed.

CURTAIN.

DICK SWIVELLER AND THE
MARCHIONESS

FROM

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

CHARACTERS.

DICK SWIVELLER (*A clerk in Sampson Brass' office.*)

A tall, sallow young man, with wiry hair and dull-eyes. He presents a very disordered appearance. Wears a brown body coat, with a great many brass buttons in front, and only one behind ; a bright check neckerchief, plaid waistcoat, soiled white trousers, and a very limp hat which he puts on wrong side foremost to hide a hole in the brim. His linen is dirty.

THE MARCHIONESS (*A maid of all work.*)

Small and very dirty. Wears a shabby dress, a coarse apron, and a large, tumbled mob-cap. Aged about 16 or 17.

Period: About 1840.

SCENE.

The office of Sampson Brass, Solicitor. Window back. Door R. Dick Swiveller discovered seated C. at table facing door, playing a game of cribbage with a dummy.

A few seconds after the curtain has risen there is a snorting sound heard to come from the other side of door.

DICK—(looking up) Hallo! What's that?

(He listens intently. The sound is repeated. He rises and softly crosses room and throws open door. The Marchioness falls into the room. He seizes her and drags her to her feet.)

MARCHIONESS—(struggling) Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed. Upon my word I didn't. It's so very dull downstairs. Please don't tell upon me, please don't.

DICK—Tell upon you. Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?

M.—Yes, upon my word I was.

DICK—How long have you been cooling your eye there?

M.—Oh, ever since you began to play them cards, and long before.

DICK—(releasing her) Well, come in. Here, sit down.

M.—Oh! I dursn't do it. Miss Sally 'ud kill me if she know'd I came up here.



DICK SWIVELLER

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DICK—Well, she can't do that, because she's not here, and won't be for hours yet, so sit down. (*She seats herself hesitatingly.*) Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by that?

M.—It an't my fault.

DICK—Well, look here, could you eat some bread and butter?

M.—(*nodding*) I should think I could.

DICK—Ah, I thought so. Well, you can have some of my supper here.

(*Crosses to window where there is a plate of meat, some bread, and a tankard of ale set out on a tray.*)

DICK—(*carrying it over to table C.*) Did you ever taste beer?

M.—I had a sip once.

DICK—Here's a state of things. She *never* tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?

M.—I don't know.

DICK—Well, I'm—but come, first of all you go and fasten that door so as we shan't get surprised by Sally Brass or anyone.

(*The Marchioness fastens door.*)

DICK—Now then, clear that off, and then you'll see what's next. Fire away.

(*The Marchioness falls to, ravenously.*)

DICK—(*after watching her for a few moments, he hands her the tankard*) Now then, take a pull at that, but moderate your transports, for you're not used to it, you know.

(She takes a drink.)

DICK—Well, is it good?

M.—Oh! isn't it? *(She continues her meal.)*

DICK—*(watching her)* Now, to make things seem more real and pleasant I shall call you Marchioness, do you hear?

(She nods, her mouth full of food.)

DICK—*(lifting tankard)* Your health, Marchioness.
(Drinks.)

DICK—The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are at the Play, are they not? *(He leans his left arm heavily on table and raises his voice and right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.)*

M.—Yes.

DICK—Ha! 'tis well. Marchioness! but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!

(He hands tankard to himself with great humility, receives it haughtily, drinks from it thirstily, and smacks his lips fiercely. The Marchioness looks at him doubtfully, rather alarmed by these demonstrations.)

DICK—*(dropping his brigand manner)* Do they often go where glory waits 'em, and leave you here?

M.—Oh, yes; I believe you they do. Miss Sally's such a one-er for that, she is.

DICK—Such a what?

M.—Such a one-er. Oh, they go to—a many places, bless you.

DICK—Is Mr. Brass a winner?

M.—(*shaking her head*) Not half what Miss Sally is, he isn't. Bless you, he'd never do anything without her, Mr. Liverer.

DICK—(*aside*) Liverer—indeed! (*aloud*) Oh, he wouldn't, wouldn't he?

M.—Miss Sally keeps him in such order; he always asks for her advice, he does, and he catches it too sometimes. Bless you, you wouldn't believe how much he catches it.

DICK—I suppose they talk together about a great many people—me for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?

(*The Marchioness nods.*)

DICK—Complimentary?

(*She shakes her head.*)

DICK—Humph! Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honour to—

M.—Miss Sally says you're a funny chap.

DICK—Well, Marchioness, that's not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or degrading quality. Old King Cole was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history.

M.—But she says you an't to be trusted.

DICK—(*thoughtfully.*) Why, really, Marchioness, several ladies and gentlemen—not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma'am, tradespeople—have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hotel over

the way, inclined strongly to that opinion when I went to procure to-night's banquet. It's a popular prejudice, Marchioness, it's a popular prejudice. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose?

M.—(*nodding*) Yes, (*imploringly*) but you won't go and tell on me, will you, or I shall be beat to death.

DICK—(*rising*) Marchioness, the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond, sometimes better; as in the present case, where his bond might prove a doubtful security. Marchioness, I am your friend. It occurs to me, though, that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eyes at keyholes, to know all this.

M.—I only wanted to know where the key of the safe was hid, that was all. I wouldn't have taken much if I had found it—only enough to squench my hunger for they keep me very short. Oh! you can't think how short they keep me. I comes out at night sometimes, after they've gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sangwiches that you'd left in the offices, or even pieces of orange peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange peel and water?

DICK—No, Marchioness, I never have imbibed that ardent liquor.

M.—Well, if you make believe very much it's quite nice, but if you don't, you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning.



DICK—Marchioness, you are a very extraordinary person. You are surrounded by mysteries: ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with your own name (which is less remarkable), and appear to delight in taking a limited view of society through keyholes. But tell me, have you found out where the key of that safe is hidden?

M.—(*shaking her head*) No, never!

DICK—No, of course not. I might have known. If you had you'd be plumper. And now, good-night, Marchioness.

M.—Good-night, Mr. Liverer.

DICK—(*taking her hand and relapsing into his brigand manner*) Marchioness, fare thee well, and if forever, then forever fare thee well—and—(*himself again*) and put the chain up, Marchioness, in case of accidents.

(*He puts his hat on with a flourish and stalks from the room, leaving the Marchioness gazing after him*).

CURTAIN.

MRS. CORNEY'S TEA PARTY FOR
TWO

FROM

OLIVER TWIST



CHARACTERS.

Mrs. CORNEY (*The matron of the work-house*).

Stout and comfortable appearance. Very sharp manner when paupers are about.

Mr. BUMBLE (*The Beadle*).

Fat, choleric, and immensely pompous—fully conscious of the importance of his position.

AN OLD PAUPER WOMAN.—Skinny and starved-looking.

Period : about 1830.

SCENE.

Mrs. Corney's sitting-room in the workhouse. Window back, over which curtains are closely drawn. A cheerful fire is burning in fireplace, L., on which a kettle is boiling. Chest of drawers and cupboard, L. Door R. Small round table and tea things set for one L.C., Chairs, etc. The wind is heard howling outside.

Mrs. Corney discovered seated, gazing reflectively into fire. She gives a sigh of contentment, rises, lifts kettle from fire, and pours the boiling water into teapot. She again seats herself and stirs the contents of teapot with a spoon.

Mrs. C.—(*giving another sigh*) Ah, well! I'm sure we have all on us a deal to be grateful for. A great deal, if we did but know it. Ah! (*She pours herself out a cup of tea. A gentle tap is heard on the door.*)

Mrs. C.—(*sharply*) Oh, come in with you.
(*Door opens slightly—wind howls louder.*)

Mrs. C.—Some of the old women dying, I suppose. They always die when I'm at meals. (*Raising her voice*) Don't stand there letting the cold air in, don't. What's amiss now, eh?



MR BUMBLE

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Mr. BUMBLE—(*putting his head round door*)
Nothing, ma'am, nothing.

Mrs. C.—(*in a much sweeter tone*) Dear me! Is that you, Mr. Bumble?

Mr. B.—(*wiping his feet on mat, and shaking snow off his coat*) At your service, ma'am. (*He enters, carrying cocked hat and stick in one hand, and a bundle in the other*).

Mrs. C.—Hard weather, Mr. Bumble.

Mr. B.—Hard indeed, ma'am! Anti-porochial weather this, ma'am. We have given away a matter of twenty quartern loaves and a cheese and a half this blessed afternoon, and yet the paupers are not contented.

Mrs. C.—Of course not. When would they be, Mr. Bumble?

Mr. B.—I never see anything like the pitch it's got to. The day afore yesterday a man—a man with hardly a rag upon his back—goes to our overseer's door when he's got company to dinner, and says he must be relieved, Mrs. Corney. As he wouldn't go away, and shocked the company very much, our overseer sent him out a pound of potatoes and half-a-pint of oatmeal. "My heart," says the ungrateful villain, "what's the use of this to me? You might as well give me a pair of iron spectacles!" "Very good," says our overseer, taking 'em away again, "you won't get anything else here." "Then I'll die in the streets," says the vagrant. "Oh, no, you won't," says our overseer. Well, ma'am, he

went away and he did die in the streets.

There's an obstinate pauper for you.

Mrs. C.—It beats anything I would have believed. But don't you think out-of-door relief a very bad thing, anyway, Mr. Bumble? You're a gentleman of experience, and ought to know. Come.

Mr. B.—(*smiling, and conscious of superior information*) Mrs. Corney, out-of-door relief, properly managed, ma'am, is the parochial safeguard. The great principle of out-of-door relief is to give the paupers exactly what they don't want, and then they get tired of coming.

Mrs. C.—Well, that is a good one, too.

Mr. B.—Yes, ma'am, and betwixt you and me, that's the rule now all over the country. But, however, these are official secrets, Mrs. Corney, ma'am, and not to be spoken of, except, as I may say, among parochial officers such as ourselves. (*He takes out two bottles from the bundle*) This is port wine, ma'am, that the Board ordered for the infirmary—real, fresh genuine port, only out of the cask this forenoon; clear as a bell, (*he holds one bottle up to the light*) and no sediment.

(*He places the bottles on chest of drawers, carefully folds up handkerchief in which they were wrapped, puts it in his pocket, and takes up his hat.*)

Mrs. C.—You'll have a cold walk, Mr. Bumble.

Mr. B.—(*turning up collar*) It blows, ma'am, enough to cut one's ears off. (*He moves towards door.*)

Mrs. C.—(*bashfully*) Won't you take a cup of tea, Mr. Bumble?

(*Mr. Bumble instantly lays down his hat and stick on chair, turns down his coat-collar, unbuttons his coat, draws chair up to table, and seats himself.*

Mrs. Corney rises, takes another cup and saucer from cupboard, returns with them to table, encountering Mr. Bumble's admiring gaze as she does so. She coyly drops her eyes and pours out a cup of tea.)

Mr. C.—(*taking up a lump of sugar with tongs*) Sweet, Mr. Bumble?

Mr. B.—(*fixing his eyes on Mrs. Corney*) Very sweet indeed, ma'am.

(*She drops in a lump, and hands him his tea. He spreads a handkerchief over his knees. She offers him toast. He takes some, and for a few moments eats and drinks in silence, now and then heaving a deep sigh. Mrs. Corney remains with downcast eyes.*

Mr. B.—(*pointing at a saucer of milk beside fireplace*) You have a cat, ma'am.

Mrs. C.—Yes, Mr. Bumble, and kittens too. I am so fond of them, you can't think. They're so happy, so frolicsome and so cheerful, that they're quite companions for me.

Mr. B.—(*approvingly*) Very nice animals ma'am; so very domestic.

Mr. C.—Oh, yes; so fond of their home, too, that it's quite a pleasure, I'm sure.

Mr. B.—(*marking time slowly with his spoon*) Mrs. Corney, ma'am, I mean to say this, ma'am: that any cat or kitten, that could live with you, and not be fond of its home, must be an ass, ma'am. (*Hitches his chair nearer hers.*)

Mrs. C.—Oh, Mr. Bumble!

Mr. B.—(*again moving his chair*) It's of no use disguising facts, ma'am. I would drown it myself with pleasure.

Mrs. C.—(*holding out her hand for his cup*) Then you're a cruel man, Mr. Bumble, and a very hard-hearted one besides.

Mr. B.—(*handing her his cup with a tender look*) Hard-hearted, ma'am, hard-hearted?

Mrs. C.—(*pouring out tea*) Yes, indeed, Mr. Bumble.
(*Mr. Bumble sighs heavily—again moves his chair till it touches hers. She hands him his tea.*)

Mr. B.—(*stirring his tea*) Are you hard-hearted, ma'am?

Mrs. C.—Dear me, Mr. Bumble, what a very curious question from a single man. Whatever can you want to know for?

(*Mr. Bumble finishes his tea—puts down cup—finishes toast—whisks crumbs off his knees—wipes his lips and deliberately kisses Mrs. Corney.*)

Mrs. C.—(*in a whisper*) Mr. Bumble, I shall scream.
(*Mr. Bumble is about to repeat the offence when knock is heard at door. He jumps up and begins to dust the wine bottles.*)

Mrs. C.—(*with asperity*)—Well, who's there?

(*The door opens.*) *Enter an old, withered, female pauper.*

OLD PAUPER—If you please, mistress, old Sally is a-going fast.

Mrs. C.—(*angrily*) What's that to me? I can't keep her alive, can I?

O.P.—No, no, mistress, nobody can do that. But she's troubled in her mind, says she's got something to tell you. She'll never die quiet till you come.

Mrs. C.—Drat the old fool.

(*She takes a shawl from a peg on door, and throws it over her shoulders.*)

Mrs. C.—(*to Mr. Bumble*) You'll stay till I come back, won't you, Mr. Bumble? (*Mr. Bumble signifies his assent, she turns sharply on the old pauper.*) Now then, don't stand there all night. Come along!

Exeunt.

(*Mr. Bumble watches them out and then complacently surveys room, with back to fire. Crosses to cupboard. Opens it. Counts teaspoons. Weighs sugar tongs in his hand and inspects the silver milk-pot. He then examines the furniture, and sits down gravely on each chair. He returns to fireplace. His eyes light on chest of drawers. He glances at door, crosses to it, and places his ear at key-hole, then softly tip-toes to chest of drawers. He opens a drawer. Examines contents. Opens another. Takes out a locked metal cash-box. He shakes*

it, it chinks. He replaces it in drawer and closes same. He deliberately takes his cocked hat, puts it on cornerwise, and gravely dances several times round table. Removes hat, and returns to fire-place.)

Mr. B.—I'll do it! I'll do it!

Enter Mrs. Corney, breathless.
(She seats herself, and places one hand over her eyes and the other on her breast).

Mr. B.—*(anxiously)* Mrs. Corney, what is it, ma'am? Has anything happened; pray answer me, ma'am? I'm on—on—on—on—er—broken bottles.

Mrs. C.—Oh, Mr. Bumble, I have been so dreadfully put out.

Mr. B.—*(majestically)* Put out, ma'am! Who has dared to—ah, I know! This is them wicious paupers.

Mrs. C.—It's dreadful to think of.

Mr. B.—Then don't think of it, ma'am. Take a little something, a little of the wine?

Mrs. C.—Not for the world. *(She is seized with spasms).* Oh, the top shelf—right hand corner—oh!

(Mr. Bumble rushes to cupboard. Snatches a green pint bottle from shelf. Fills a teacup with contents, and holds it to Mrs. Corney's lips. She drinks about one half.)

Mrs. C.—There, I'm better now.

(Mr. Bumble raises his eyes, in thankfulness, to the ceiling; brings them down again. They rest on brim of cup. He lifts it to his nose.)



MRS. CORNEY

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Mrs. C.—(*faintly*) Peppermint! Try it. There's a little, a little something else in it.

(*Mr. Bumble tastes it doubtfully. Smacks his lips in evident satisfaction. Takes another taste and sets down cup, empty.*)

Mrs. C.—It's very comforting.

Mr. B.—Very much so indeed, ma'am.

(*Draws his chair beside Mrs. Corney and seats himself.*)

Mr. B.—Now, ma'am, tell me what it was that distressed you?

Mrs. C.—Nothing. I am a foolish, excitable, weak creetur, Mr. Bumble.

Mr. B.—Not weak, ma'am. Are you a weak creetur, Mrs. Corney?

Mrs. C.—We are all weak creatures.

Mr. B.—So we are!

(*She sighs deeply.*)

Mr. B.—Don't sigh, Mrs. Corney.

Mrs. C.—I can't help it. (*Sighs again.*)

Mr. B.—(*glancing round*) This is a very comfortable room, ma'am. (*She assents.*) Another room and this, ma'am, would be a complete thing.

Mrs. C.—(*softly*) It would be too much for one.

Mr. B.—But not for two, ma'am, (*takes her hand*) ch, Mrs. Corney?

(*Mrs. Corney bashfully turns away. Releases her hand to get pocket handkerchief. Then replaces hand in Mr. Bumble's.*)

Mr. B.—The Board allow you coals, don't they, Mrs. Corney?

Mrs. C.—(*tenderly*) And candles.

Mrs. B.—(*ecstatically*) Coals, candles, and house rent free. What parochial perfection. (*After a pause*) You know, Mr. Slout, the master of this establishment is worse to-night, my fascinator?

Mrs. C.—(*bashfully*) Yes.

Mr. B.—He can't live a week, the doctor says. His death will cause a vacancy; that vacancy must be filled up. Oh, Mrs. Corney, what a prospect this opens! What an opportunity for joining hearts and housekeeping! (*Mrs. Corney sobs.*)

Mr. B.—(*bending nearer her*) The little, little, little word, my blessed Corney.

Mrs. C.—(*softly*) Ye—ye—ye—yes.

Mr. B.—Oh, Mrs. Corney, what an angel you are!

(*She sinks into his arms.*)

CURTAIN.

OLIVER TWIST IN FAGIN'S DEN

FROM

OLIVER TWIST



CHARACTERS.

OLIVER TWIST.

A tall, pale lad of about 10 or 11 years of age.
Well dressed at first ; afterwards in rags.

FAGIN (*A Jew thief.*)

Very old and shrivelled and villainous looking.
His face is obscured by a quantity of matted
red hair. He wears a dressing gown and a
night-cap.

THE ARTFUL DODGER

CHARLEY BATES

BILL SIKES (*A Burglar.*)

} Pickpockets.
} About 14 years of age.

A stoutly built man of about 35 years. He
has a broad heavy countenance with a beard
of two or three days' growth. He wears a
black velveteen coat, soiled drab breeches,
grey cotton stockings and lace-up half boots.
A brown hat is on his head and a dirty
handkerchief with long frayed ends round his
neck.

NANCY.

A large, well-made, handsome girl. Aged
about 20.

Period: About 1830.

SCENE.

Fagin's Den. Walls and ceiling are perfectly black with dirt, and there is a general air of squalor about the place. A deal table stands C., upon which is a candle stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, some pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate.

Door R. opening into passage. Door L. opening into inner room. Fire-place back, in front of which a clothes horse is standing covered with a number of silk handkerchiefs.

Fagin discovered examining the handkerchiefs in firelight.

Charley Bates and the Artful Dodger are seated at table, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits with the air of middle-aged men.

FAGIN—You say that Nancy's on the scent, Dodger?

DODGER—Yes, and pretty tired of it she is too. She's watching the house what the old cove took the young brat to, when he got him away from the traps, but he's been ill, confined to the crib, and—

(Footsteps heard outside. Loud knock on door.)

FAGIN—Who can that be?

(Knock is repeated.)



FAGIN

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FAGIN—See who it is, Dodger.

Exit into inner room L.

The Artful Dodger crosses to door and unbars it. Enter Bill Sikes, dragging in Oliver Twist, who carries a parcel of books. They are followed by Nancy.

SIKES—(looking round room) Where's the old 'un?

DODGER—(indicating inner room with his thumb) In there, and precious down in the mouth he has been. Won't he be glad to see you? (ironically) Oh, no!

CHARLEY—(bursting into roars of laughter) Oh, my wig, my wig, here he is; (pointing at Oliver) here he is, oh cry, here he is. Fagin, Fagin, come here and look at him. I can't bear it, it's such a jolly game. Hold me someone while I laugh it out.

Enter Fagin.

(He takes off his night-cap and bows in mock humility before Oliver, who surveys the scene with frightened eyes.)

FAGIN—Delighted to see you looking so well, Oliver, my dear. Why didn't you write, my dear, and say you were coming? We'd have got something warm for supper.

(They all laugh loudly except Nancy.)

CHARLEY—(holding up candle close to Oliver) Look at his togs, Fagin! Look at his togs—superfine cloth and the heavy swell cut! Oh, my eye, what a game! And his books too; nothing but a gentleman, Fagin!

FAGIN—The Artful shall give you another suit, my dear, for fear you should spoil that Sunday one. But go through his pockets first, boys!
(The Artful Dodger proceeds to do so and draws out a bank-note which Fagin seizes.)

SIKES—Hullo! what's that? That's mine, Fagin.

FAGIN—No, no, my dear. Mine, Bill, mine. You shall have the books.

SIKES—*(determinedly)* If that ain't mine, mine and Nancy's, that is, I'll take the boy back again.
(Oliver starts and looks from the one to the other.)

SIKES—Come on, hand over, will you?

FAGIN—This is hardly fair, Bill. Is it, Nancy?

SIKES—Fair or not fair, hand over I tell you! Do you think Nancy and me has got nothing else to do with our precious time but to spend it in scouting arter, and kidnapping every young boy as gets grabbed through you? Give it here, you avaricious old skeleton, give it here!
(He snatches the note from the Jew's hand and ties it up in his handkerchief.)

SIKES—That's for our share of the trouble, and not half enough, neither. You may keep the books if you're fond of reading. If you ain't, sell 'em.

CHARLEY—*(who has been affecting to read one of the volumes)* They're very pretty; beautiful writing, isn't it, Oliver? *(Bursts into another roar.)*

OLIVER—*(wringing his hands)* They belong to the old gentleman, to the good, kind, old gentleman who took me into his house, and had



Q

me nursed, when I was near dying of fever. (*Falls on his knees before Fagin.*) Oh, pray send them back—send him back the books and money! Keep me here all my life long, but pray, pray send them back. He'll think I stole them; the old lady, all of them who were so kind to me, will think I stole them. Oh, do have mercy and send them back.

(*He weeps passionately.*)

FAGIN—(*rubbing his hands together and chuckling*) You're right, Oliver, they will think you've stolen them. Ha! Ha! It couldn't have happened better if we had chosen our time.

SIKES—Of course it couldn't. I know'd that directly I see him coming through Clarkenwell with the books under his arm. It's all right enough. They're soft-hearted psalm singers and they'll ask no questions after him, fear they should be obliged to prosecute and so get him lagged. He's safe enough.

FAGIN—Yes, my dear, he's safe enough!

(*Crosses to fireplace and picks up a stout, knotted stick.*)

FAGIN—(*to Oliver*) So you wanted to get away, eh, my dear? Well, we'll cure you of that, my young master.

(*He inflicts a smart blow on Oliver's shoulders.*)

FAGIN—(*lifting the stick again*) We'll cure you of—

NANCY—Stop!

(*She wrests the stick from Fagin's hand and flings it across the room.*)

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NANCY—I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin! You've got the child, and what more would you have? Let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you that will bring me to the gallows before my time. (*She stamps her foot violently.*)

FAGIN—(*nervously—after a considerable pause*) Why, Nancy, you—you're more clever than ever to-night. Ha! Ha! my dear, you are acting beautifully.

NANCY—(*fiercely*) Am I? Take care I don't overdo it. You will be the worse for it, Fagin, if I do. (*Fagin shrinks back—casts an imploring glance at Sikes.*)

SIKES—(*to Nancy*) Strike me blind, what do you mean by this? Burn my body! Do you know who you are and what you are?

NANCY—(*hysterically*) Oh, yes, I know all about it.

SIKES—Well, then, keep quiet, (*threatening her*) or I'll quiet you for a good long time to come. Do you hear?

NANCY—(*controlling herself*) I hear.

SIKES—(*contemptuously*) You are a nice one to take up the humane and genteel side. A pretty subject for the child, as you call him, to make a friend of!

NANCY—(*passionately*) God Almighty help me, I am, and I wish I'd been struck dead in the street, before I had a hand in bringing him here. He's a thief, a liar, a devil, all that's bad, from this night forth. Isn't that enough for the old wretch without blows?



FAGIN—Come, come, Sikes, we must have civil words
—civil words, Bill.

NANCY—(*furiously*) Civil words! civil words, you
villain! Yes! you deserve 'em from me. I
thieved for you when I was a child not half so
old as this (*indicating Oliver*). I have been
in the same trade and in the same service for
twelve years since.

FAGIN—Well, well, and, if you have, it's your living.

NANCY—Ay, it is my living, and the cold, wet, dirty
streets are my home; and you are the wretch
that drove me to them long ago, and that 'll
keep me there, day and night, day and night,
till I die.

*(In a transport of frenzy she makes a rush at
Fagin but is seized by Sikes.)*

SIKES—(*savagely*) The girl's gone mad, I think.

*(She wrenches herself free and with a loud
burst of hysterical laughter rushes from the room.)*

SIKES—(*wiping his forehead*) She'll be alright now.
She's uncommon strong in the arms when
she's taken this way.

FAGIN—It's the worst of having to do with women,
but they are clever, and we can't get on in our
line without 'em. Now then, Charley, take
Oliver in there and pull off his smart clothes
and I'll take care of 'em.

CHARLEY—Prime, prime. My wig, what fun it is!
Come on.

*Exeunt Charley Bates, the Artful Dodger and
Oliver Twist. Door L.*

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FAGIN—Come now, Bill, sit down and let's talk business. (*He seats himself at the table and motions Sikes to do likewise.*)

SIKES—(*also seating himself and pouring out some spirits*) Well, I'm ready, so say what you've got to say?

FAGIN—(*in a very low tone*) About that crib at Chertsey, Bill?

SIKES—Yes. Wot about it?

FAGIN—Ah! you know what I mean, my dear.

SIKES—Oh, no I don't, or won't, and that's the same thing. Don't sit there, winking and blinking, and talking to me in hints, as if you warn't the very first that thought about the robbery. Speak out and call things by their right names.

FAGIN—(*looking round suspiciously*) Hush, Bill, hush; somebody will hear us, my dear, somebody will hear us.

SIKES—Let 'em, I don't care.

FAGIN—There, there, it was only my caution, nothing more (*drawing his chair nearer to Sikes*). Now, my dear, about that crib at Chertsey. Such plate, my dear, such plate! When is it to be done, Bill?

(*Rubbing his hands and lifting his eyes in rapture.*)

SIKES—Not at all!

FAGIN—Not to be done at all!

SIKES—No, not at all; at least it can't be a put up job, as we expected.

FAGIN—(*angrily*) Then it hasn't been properly gone about. Don't tell me.

SIKES—But I will tell you. Who are you that's not to be told. I tell you that Toby Crackit has been hanging about the place for a fortnight, and he can't get one of the servants into line. The old lady has had them these twenty years, and if you were to give 'em five hundred they wouldn't be in it.

FAGIN—(*incredulously*) Do you mean to say, Bill, that flash Toby Crackit couldn't get the women over?

SIKES—He says he's worn sham whiskers, and a canary waistcoat, the whole blessed times he's been loitering down there; and it's all of no use.

FAGIN—He should have tried mustachios and a pair of military trousers, my dear.

SIKES—So he did, and they warn't of no more use than the other plant.

FAGIN—Then I suppose the game's up. It's a sad thing, my dear, to lose so much when we had set our hearts upon it.

(*He sits ruminating. Sikes looks round the room to make sure he is not overheard, and then leans forward and speaks in a low voice.*)

SIKES—Fagin. (*Fagin starts from his reverie.*) Fagin, is it worth fifty shiners extra if it's safely done from the outside?

FAGIN—(*eagerly*) Yes! my dear, yes.

SIKES—Then listen. Toby and I were over the garden wall the night afore last, sounding the panels of the door and shutters. The crib's barred up at night like a jail, but there's one part we can crack, safe and softly.

FAGIN—Which is that, Bill?

SIKES—Why, you cross the lawn.

FAGIN—Yes, yes.

SIKES—(*Perceiving the eagerness depicted on Fagin's face*) Umph! Never mind which part it is. It's best to be on the safe side when one deals with you.

FAGIN—Well, well, as you like, my dear, as you like. Is there no help wanted but yours and Toby's?

SIKES—None, 'cept a centre-bit and a boy. The first we've both got, the second you must find us.

FAGIN—A boy! Oh! then it's a panel, eh?

SIKES—Never mind wot it is, but I want a boy, and he musn't be a big 'un.

(*Fagin strokes his chin and glances towards inner room.*)

FAGIN—(*in a hoarse whisper and pointing to Door L.*) Young Oliver Twist!

SIKES—What about him?

FAGIN—(*laying his finger on the side of his nose*) He's the boy for you, my dear.

SIKES—He!

FAGIN—Yes, Bill, he mayn't be so much up as any of the others, but that's not what you want if he's only to open a door for you. Besides, the others are all too big.

SIKES—(*considering*) Well, he is just the size I want.

FAGIN—And will do everything you want, Bill, my dear; he can't help himself, that is, if you frighten him.

SIKES—(*with a hoarse laugh*) Frighten him? It'll be no sham frightening, mind you. If there's anything queer about him when once we get into the work, you won't see him alive again, Fagin. Think of that before you send him.

FAGIN—(*with energy*) I've thought of it all, my dear. Once let him feel that he is one of us, once let him feel that he has been a thief, and he's ours! Ours for his life. Oho! it couldn't have come about better. Ho! Ho! Ho!

SIKES—Ours? Yours, you mean.

FAGIN—Well, perhaps I do, my dear. Mine, if you like, Bill, mine. (*He chuckles and hugs himself with joy.*) When is it to be done, Bill?

SIKES—I planned with Toby for to-morrow night if he heerd nothing from me to the contrary.

FAGIN—Good, good, and there's no moon?

SIKES—No.

FAGIN—It's all arranged about bringing off the swag, is it?

SIKES—(*impatently*) Yes, yes, it's all planned. Never mind particulars. See here, I'll be off home now and fetch my tools and come back here for the boy. Have him ready, then all you'll have to do is to hold yer tongue, and keep the melting pot ready.

FAGIN—Excellent, Bill, excellent, he shall be ready. I'll walk with you to the corner.

(*He takes off his dressing-gown and puts on an old overcoat and broad-brimmed hat that he takes down from a peg.*)

FAGIN—(*opening Door L.*) Dodger, bring Oliver in here. I want to speak to him when I come back.

THE ARTFUL—Right, Fagin.

*Exeunt Bill Sikes and Fagin Door R.
Enter Charley Bates, the Artful Dodger and Oliver Twist, who is now dressed in ragged apparel. The Artful seats himself upon the table, and thrusts forth his right leg.*

THE ARTFUL—Now then, my covey, make yourself useful, and jegan my trotter-cases.

OLIVER—I—I don't understand.

THE ARTFUL—(*to Charley*) My eyes, how jolly green he is. (*To Oliver*) I mean clean my boots.

OLIVER—Oh, certainly.

THE ARTFUL—There's a brush over there.

*(Indicates a shelf by fireplace.
Oliver fetches the brush, kneels down and takes the Artful Dodger's boot upon his knee and begins to brush it.)*

THE ARTFUL—(*after surveying him for a few seconds, with an air of abstraction*) What a pity he isn't a prig!

CHARLEY—Ah! he don't know what's good for him.

THE ARTFUL—(*mournfully*) I suppose you don't even know what a prig is?

OLIVER—(*looking up*) I think I know that. It's a th—(*checking himself*) You're one, aren't you?

THE ARTFUL—I am. So's Charley. So's Fagin. So's Sikes. So's Nancy. We all are, and 'ud scorn to be anythink else.



BILL SIKES

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CHARLEY—Why don't you put yourself under Fagin, Oliver?

THE ARTFUL—(*grinning*) And make your fortin' out o' hand.

OLIVER—(*timidly*) But I don't like it. I wish they would let me go. I—I would rather go.

CHARLEY—And Fagin would rather not!

(*Oliver sighs and continues the boot cleaning.*)

THE ARTFUL—(*drawing a handful of shillings and pence from his pocket*) Look here, here's a jolly life! What's the odds where it comes from? (*Offering Oliver some of the coins*) Here, catch hold; there's plenty more where they were took from. (*Oliver shakes his head.*) What, you won't, won't you? Oh, you precious flat.

CHARLEY—It's naughty, ain't it, Oliver? He'll come to be scragged, won't he?

OLIVER—I don't know what that means.

CHARLEY—Something in this way, old feller. (*He gives a lively pantomimic representation of an execution by hanging.*)

CHARLEY—That's what it means.

(*They both laugh heartily.*)

THE ARTFUL—You've been brought up bad, but Fagin will make something of you, though, or you'll be the first he ever turned out improfitable. You'd better begin at once, and always put this in yer pipe, Nolly. If you don't take fogles and tickers—

CHARLEY—What's the good of talking in that way? he don't know what you mean.

Enter Fagin. He stands in doorway unseen by them, listening to the conversation.

THE ARTFUL—Wot I mean is, if you don't take pocket hankercers and watches some other cove will : so that the coves that lose 'em will be all the worse, and you'll be all the worse too, and nobody half a ha'porth the better, except the chaps wot gets them.

FAGIN—(*coming forward and chuckling with delight*) To be sure, to be sure. It all lies in a nutshell, my dear, in a nutshell ; take the Dodger's word for it. Ha ha ! He understands the catechism of the trade. But now be off, boys, it's time you were getting to work, and I want to have a leetle talk alone with Oliver.

CHARLEY—Yes, Dodger, come on, Fagin's right. It is time we were padding the hoof.

Exeunt Charley Bates and the Artful Dodger Door R.

FAGIN—(*looking after them*) Ah, Oliver, you should make 'em your models, my dear, make 'em your models. Mark my words. The Dodger will be a great man one day, my dear, a great man. But now listen to me, my dear, listen to me. Bill Sikes will be here in a few minutes to fetch you away to his house.

OLIVER—To—to—stop there, sir ?

FAGIN—No, no, not to stop there. We shouldn't like to lose you. Don't be afraid, Oliver, you shall come back to us again. We won't be so cruel as to send you away, my dear. Oh, no, no. (*He chuckles softly.*)



THE ARTFUL DODGER

[face p. 204



FAGIN—(*fixing his eyes on Oliver*) I suppose you want to know what you're going to Bill's for, eh, my dear?

OLIVER—Yes, sir.

FAGIN—What do you think?

OLIVER—Indeed I don't know.

FAGIN—(*annoyed*) Bah! Wait till Bill tells you, then, but take heed, Oliver, take heed. (*shaking his finger warningly*) He's a rough man, and thinks nothing of blood when his is up. Whatever falls out, say nothing, and do what he bids you. Mind! Hush, here he is.

Enter Bill Sikes, wearing a great-coat.

SIKES—Ah! so the kid's ready.

FAGIN—Yes, here he is.

SIKES—Good! He's quiet now, then?

FAGIN—(*casting a keen glance at Oliver*) As a lamb!

SIKES—(*with a grim laugh*) I'm glad to hear it, for the sake of his young carcase, as would otherwise have suffered. (*He seats himself on table.*) Come here, young 'un. (*Oliver goes slowly to him. He takes Oliver by the shoulder and stands him in front of him.*) I'm going to read you a lectur.

SIKES—(*taking a pistol from his pocket*) Now, first; do you know wot this is?

OLIVER—Yes, sir. A pistol.

SIKES—(*loading it*) Well then, look here. This is powder, that 'ere's a bullet, and this is a little bit of old boot for wadding. (*Pause while Sikes finishes loading.*)

SIKES—Now it's loaded.

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OLIVER—Yes, I see it is, sir.

SIKES—(*grasping Oliver firmly by the wrist and placing barrel close to his temple*) Well, if you speak a word when you're out o' doors with me, except when I speak to you, that loading will be in your head without notice. So if you do make up your mind to speak without leave, say your prayers. Now, you understand that?

OLIVER—(*trembling*) Yes.

SIKES—(*rising*) Good; then now we'll be off, for it's late as it is. Good-night, Fagin.

FAGIN—Good-night, Bill; take care of him, Bill, take care of him.

SIKES—(*grimly tapping pocket in which is the pistol*) I'll take care of him.

FAGIN—You'll do, Bill, you'll do. Good-night, Oliver, my dear.

SIKES—(*taking Oliver roughly by the arm*) Come on, you young devil.

Exeunt Bill Sikes and Oliver Twist.

FAGIN—(*standing rubbing his hands together and looking after them*) Good-night, my dears, good-night. Now he is really mine. Mine for life!

CURTAIN.

BOB CRATCHIT'S CHRISTMAS DINNER

FROM

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

CHARACTERS.

BOB CRATCHIT, (*A clerk in Ebenezer Scrooge's employ.*)

He is a thin, ill-fed looking man of medium height. When he first enters he wears a long, white wool comforter that dangles below his waist. His clothes are threadbare but scrupulously neat.

Mrs. CRATCHIT, (*Bob's Wife.*)

Also thin and careworn but very cheerful. Her dark dress is shabby but very neat and clean. She wears an apron and has a bunch of cherry-coloured ribbons at her breast.

MARTHA, (*their eldest daughter.*)

A bright, refined-looking girl of about 19.

BELINDA, (*A younger daughter.*)

Also decked out in ribbons.

PETER, (*Their eldest son.*)

The principal feature of his attire is an enormous shirt collar, the ends of which are constantly getting into his mouth. He is aged about 15.

THE TWINS—Aged some 9 years.

TINY TIM, (*Their youngest child.*)

He is a cripple, and only moves with the aid of a little crutch. He is aged about 8.

Period: About 1845.

SCENE.

Kitchen at Bob Cratchit's. Large Round Table C. Window and fireplace back. Door R leading to wash-house. Street Door L.

Mrs. Cratchit discovered very busily laying the cloth, assisted by Belinda. Peter is standing by fireplace superintending the boiling of the potatoes. Now and then he lifts the lid and plunges a fork into the saucepan.

Enter the two young Cratchits. They dance delightedly round the table.

1st YOUNG CRATCHIT—Oh mummy, mummy, we've been outside the baker's and smelt our goose cooking.

Mrs. CRATCHIT—(*laughing*) How did you know it was ours?

2nd Y.C.—'Cos we smelt the sage and onions.

Mrs C.—(*embracing them both simultaneously*) Bless your little hearts. But whatever has got your precious father then? And Tiny Tim? And Martha warn't as late last Christmas by half an hour?

BELINDA—(*who has crossed to window and stands looking out*) Here's Martha, mother!

(*The two young Cratchits run out and re-enter immediately dragging in Martha.*)

CHILDREN—Hurrah! hurrah! Here's Martha, here's Martha!



BOB CRATCHIT

[face p. 210

1st Y.C.—Oh, Martha, there's such a goose.

Mrs. C.—(*kissing Martha heartily and taking off her shawl*) Why bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!

MARTHA—We'd a deal of work to finish up last night and had to clear away this morning, mother.

Mrs. C.—Well, never mind so long as you are come. Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye.

(*Martha crosses to fire but stops on perceiving Peter's collar.*)

MARTHA—My word! look at Peter's fine new collar. (*Peter looks conscious of the grandeur of his appearance*) Why! he ought to show his linen in the fashionable parks. Where did you get it, Peter?

PETER—(*highly pleased*) Father gave it me for Christmas day.

BELINDA—And look at Mother's lovely new ribbon.

MARTHA—(*hugging her mother*) You dear!

Mrs. C.—(*laughing*) Ay! it's a goodly show for sixpence, isn't it?

The Two Y.C's.—(*excitedly*) There's father coming! Hide, Martha, hide!

(*Great scrimmage ensues. Martha is pushed behind wash-house door. The others ostentatiously busy themselves in the preparations. Belinda, Peter, and the two young Cratchits endeavour to maintain properly severe expressions but frequently give way to explosions of merriment. Footsteps heard outside. Enter Bob*

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Cratchit carrying Tiny Tim on his shoulder. He gallops round the room but stops very much out of breath facing Mrs. Cratchit.)

TINY TIM—Whoa! Whoa! my blood horse.

(Bob tenderly puts him down and looks round for Martha.)

BOB.—Why, where's Martha?

Mrs. C.—*(with elaborate indifference and polishing up glasses with her apron)* Not coming!

BOB—*(with sudden declension of spirits)* Not coming! Not coming on Christmas Day!

(Martha runs out from behind door into his arms.)

MARTHA.—Here I am, father, it was only a joke.

(They hug one another. The children join hands and dance delightedly round them, crying "Merry Xmas.")

1st Y.C.—Tim, come and hear the pudding singing in the copper.

(They bear off Tiny Tim.)

Mrs. C.—Now then, Peter, are the potatoes ready?

PETER—Yes, mother, they be knocking at the lid to be let out.

Mrs. C.—Then off you go and fetch the goose.

(Peter seizes his cap and exit.)

The Two Y.C's.—*(outside)* We'll go too, mother!

(They enter and rush off after Peter. Mrs. Cratchit takes potatoes from saucepan and proceeds to mash them while Bob turns up his cuffs and compounds some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons.)

Mrs. C.—And how did our little Tim behave?

BOB—As good as gold, and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful sitting there, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in church, because he was a cripple and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

(He blows his nose very loudly and Mrs. Cratchit sniffs audibly.)

Enter Tiny Tim very slowly upon his crutches.

BOB—*(tremulously)* Why look, mother, here's our Tiny Tim getting quite strong and hearty.

(Great racket heard outside. Enter Peter carrying goose in great triumph, followed by the two young Cratchits who march to the accompaniment of a song of praise. Great rush to see the bird amid chorus of approbation.)

TINY TIM—*(clapping his hands)* Ooh! isn't it lovely?

Mrs. C.—Now then, bustle round everybody. Peter, you dish up the potatoes! Belinda, where's the gravy?

BELINDA—In the saucepan, mother, and all hissing hot!

Mrs. C.—Thank you, dear; then you sweeten up the apple sauce, and, Martha, you dust the hot plates.

(General scene of great activity ensues. Mrs. Cratchit pours gravy over the goose and deposits it upon table. Bob places his brew upon the hob

and carries Tiny Tim to his stool. The two young Cratchits place chairs for everybody, colliding with everybody in so doing. The others all do as bidden.)

Mrs. C.—Now then, is everybody ready?

(General chorus of "Yes.")

(They all take their places at the table. Mrs. Cratchit takes carving knife and looks along it preparatory to plunging it into the goose. A breathless silence ensues, succeeded by a murmur of delight as she does so.)

ALL—Ooooh!!!

1st Y.C.—Oh! look at the stuffing!

2nd Y.C.—Isn't it beautiful?

TINY TIM—*(in a small voice, beating table with handle of his knife)* Hurrah! Hurrah!

Mrs. C.—*(carving at white-heat)* Now there's some for Father *(pause)* and some for Tiny Tim. Everyone must help themselves to apple sauce and mashed potatoes.

(Everybody having been helped, there is a long silence during which the family eat.)

BOB—*(his mouth full)* My dear, I've never tasted such a goose. *(General approbation.)*

MARTHA—Such a flavour!

PETER—So tender!

BELINDA—Such a size!

Mrs. C.—And so cheap!

(Another silence, followed by sighs of content as they put down their knives and forks.)



Mrs. C.—(*looking round table*) Has everybody had enough?

ALL—Yes!

Mrs. C.—Does anybody want any more?

ALL—No!

Mrs. C.—(*with great delight pointing to small atom of a bone left upon the dish*) And even now we haven't eaten it all.

(*Belinda rises and changes the plates.*)

MARTHA—Shall I fetch the pudding, mother dear?

Mrs. C.—No, dear, I'd rather go alone. To tell you the truth I'm rather nervous about it!

(*A gloom descends upon party.*)

Exit Mrs. Cratchit.

BELINDA—Suppose it isn't done!

MARTHA—Or suppose it should break in turning out!

PETER—Or suppose somebody should have got over the wall and stolen it!

(*Shrieks of horror from the two young Cratchits.*)

BOB—(*looking into wash-house*) Hullo! there's a great deal of steam!

BELINDA—It's out of the copper.

TINY TIM—It smells like washing day at the laundress' next door.

MARTHA—That's the cloth.

(*Cries of joy as Mrs. Cratchit enters, proudly bearing the rather small pudding blazing with ignited brandy and bedight with holly. They watch her enthralled as she apports it out.*)

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BOB—(*with great relish*) My dear, it's a wonderful pudding. I regard this as the greatest success you have achieved since our marriage.

Mrs. C.—Do you all really like it?

ALL—Yes! Yes!

Mrs. C.—Well, now that weight is off my mind, I will confess to you I thought I hadn't put in enough flour.

(*Cries of derision.*)

Mrs. C.—Now, somebody put on the chestnuts!

BOB—And fetch the oranges.

(*Martha and Belinda leap up.*)

BOB—(*to Martha*) No, dear, don't you get up. You're always kept working! Let the others do it!

MARTHA—(*laughing*) Nonsense, father; besides, to-morrow being my holiday I'm going to lie abed all the morning (*kissing him*). May I?

BOB—Of course you shall, my dear! Now then, Peter, you fetch out the family glass and I'll give you all a toast.

(*Peter fetches two tumblers and a custard-cup without a handle.*)

BOB—(*fetching the jug from hob and pouring out contents*) They're not very fine but they'll hold as well as golden goblets.

BOB—(*raising glass*) Now then, I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast.

Mrs. C.—(*indignantly*) Founder of the Feast indeed! I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

BOB—(*mildly*) My dear. Christmas Day.

Mrs. C.—It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!

BOB—My dear. Christmas Day.

Mrs C.—I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's, not for his. Long life to him. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt. (*She drinks.*)

BOB—Come now—Mr. Scrooge.

ALL—(*without the smallest enthusiasm*) Mr. Scrooge, Mr. Scrooge.

(*The glasses are passed round and the health is drunk amid general depression.*)

BOB—(*brightly*) And now I've got something to tell you. Do you know I've got a situation in my eye for Master Peter which will bring him in five and sixpence weekly?

(*Chorus of delight, the two young Cratchits crying "Hurrah, Hurrah" in an access of joy. Peter looks thoughtfully out from between his collar into audience.*)

Mrs. C.—Peter's looking very thoughtful.

BOB—(*laughing*) Perhaps he's thinking which particular investment he will favour when he is in receipt of the money.

Mrs. C.—Only hear that, Peter.

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MARTHA—Why, we shall have our Peter keeping company with someone, and setting up for himself. (*Great laughter.*)

PETER—(*grinning*) Get along with you.

BOB—Likely enough one of these days, though there's plenty of time for that. Now I'm going to give you another toast.

(*They all stand up.*)

BOB—A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us.

(*They all repeat.*)

TINY TIM—(*putting his hand into his father's*). God bless us every one.

CURTAIN.

BELLA WILFER'S RETURN

FROM

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND



CHARACTERS.

Mr. R. W. WILFER.

A short, chubby, smooth-faced little fair man, very boyish in appearance.

Mrs. WILFER (*His Wife*).

Tall and angular. Her head is tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, knotted under the chin. She habitually wears gloves.

BELLA WILFER (*His Daughter*.)

An exceedingly pretty girl of 20.

LAVINIA WILFER (*His Younger Daughter*.)

A sharp-looking girl of 19.

JOHN ROKESMITH.

Tall and dark. Aged about 30.

GEORGE SAMPSON.

Very nervous, timid, self-conscious manner.

Period: About 1860.

SCENE.

Parlour at the Wilfer's. Door R. Window back. Table laid for supper R. C. Sofa L. C. Fireplace L. Mrs. Wilfer discovered seated very rigidly on very stiff chair. Lavinia and George are playing draughts, L.

Enter Mr. R. W. Wilfer.

R. W.—Hulloa, my dears (*kisses his wife and daughter and shakes hands with George Sampson*) My dear (*to Mrs. Wilfer*) surely I missed the plate from the front door.

Mrs. W.—Yes, the man came himself with a pair of pincers, and took it off, and took it away. He said that as he had no expectation of ever being paid for it, and as he had an order for another *Ladies' School* door-plate, it was better (burnished up) for the interests of all parties.

R. W.—Perhaps it was, my dear; what do you think?

Mrs. W.—You are master here, R. W., it is as you think, not as I do. Perhaps it might have been better if the man had taken the door too.

R. W.—My dear, we couldn't have done without the door.

Mrs. W.—Couldn't we?

R. W.—Why, my dear! Could we?



(R)

Mrs. W.—It is as you think, R. W., not as I do.

R. W.—Well, my dear, as we have now let our first floor so well, we have no place in which you could teach pupils, even if pupils—

Mrs. W.—(*with severe monotony*) The milkman said he knew of two young ladies of the highest respectability who were in search of a suitable establishment, and he took a card. Tell your father whether it was last Monday, Lavinia.

LAVINIA—But we never heard any more of it, Ma.

R. W.—In addition to which, my dear, if you have no place to put two young persons into—

Mrs. W.—Pardon me, they were not young persons. Two young ladies of the highest respectability. Tell your father, Lavinia, whether the milkman said so.

R. W.—My dear, it is the same thing.

Mrs. W.—(*with impressive monotony*) No, it is not. Pardon me.

R. W.—I mean, my dear, it is the same thing as to space—as to space. If you have no space in which to put two youthful fellow-creatures, however eminently respectable, which I do not doubt, where are those youthful fellow-creatures to be accommodated? I carry it no further than that. And solely looking at it, my dear, as I am sure you will agree, my love, from a fellow-creature point of view, my dear.

Mrs. W.—(*waving her gloved hands*) I have nothing more to say. It is as you think, R. W., not as I do.

(She dismisses the whole affair with a renunciatory action of her gloves. Knock heard on door).

Mr. W.—Who is it? Enter.

Enter Bella Wilfer.

LAVINIA—Why, Ma, it's Bella!

Mrs. W.—*(rising)* My child is welcome, though unlooked for, *(presents her cheek to Bella)* Does the male domestic of Mrs. Boffin wait outside?

BELLA—There is no one waiting, Ma dear.

Mrs. W.—*(majestically)* There is no one waiting?

BELLA—No, Ma, dear.

Mrs. W.—An Enigma! *(she turns to R. IV.)* Unless, R. W., you have taken the precaution of making some addition to our frugal supper on your way home, it will prove but a distasteful one to Bella. Cold mutton and a lettuce can ill compete with the luxuries of Mr. Boffin's board.

BELLA—Pray don't talk like that, Ma dear, Mr. Boffin's board is nothing to me. I have left Mr. Boffin's house for good, Ma, and I have come home again.

(Mrs. Wilfer glares at Bella for a moment in awful silence, then retires to her corner of state, backward, and sits down).

BELLA—In short, Mamma, I have had a very serious difference with Mr. Boffin on the subject of his treatment of a member of his household, and it's a final difference, and there's an end of all *(she takes off her bonnet).*



LAVINIA—George! George Sampson, speak! What did I tell you about those Boffins?

GEORGE—(*timidly*) Er—er—yes, indeed!

LAVINIA—Yes! I told George Sampson, as George Sampson tells you, that those hateful Boffins would pick a quarrel with Bella as soon as her novelty had worn off. Have they done it, or have they not? Was I right, or was I wrong? And what do you say to us, Bella, of your Boffins now?

BELLA—Lavvy and Ma, I say of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin what I have always said, and what I have always said I shall always say. But nothing will induce me to quarrel with anyone to-night. I hope you are not sorry to see me, Ma, dear (*kisses her*), and I hope you are not sorry to see me, Lavvy (*kisses her*). And now, as I notice the lettuce Ma mentioned on the table, I'll make the salad, for it's past supper time.

(*Goes to table and begins to make the salad. Mrs. Wilfer, speechless, rises, and stalks towards table.*)

LAVINIA—(*sharply*) George! Ma's chair.

(*George rises hurriedly, takes Mrs. Wilfer's chair, and follows her closely to table. Arrived there, she seats herself rigidly, after favouring George with a glare. Silence is maintained while R. W. carves the mutton.*)

R. W.—Mutton to your Ma, Lavvy.

(*Lavvy passes mutton to Mrs. Wilfer, who*

receives and partakes of it in a petrified absence of mind, occasionally laying down her knife and fork, and glaring round at the party.)

R. W.—*(after another pause)* Bella, my dear, I dare say your Ma would take some lettuce if you were to put it on her plate. *(Bella does so.)*

LAVINIA—*(after another pause)* I wish to goodness, Ma, you'd loll a little.

Mrs. W.—How! Loll?

LAVINIA—Yes, Ma.

Mrs. W.—*(impressively)* I hope I am incapable of it.

LAVINIA—I am sure you look so, Ma. But why one should sup with one's own family as if one's under-petticoat were a backboard, I do not understand.

Mrs. W.—*(with deep scorn)* Neither do I understand how a young lady can mention the garment in the name in which you have indulged. I blush for you.

LAVINIA—Thank you, Ma, but I can do it for myself—I am obliged to you—when there is any occasion.

GEORGE—*(with a peacemaking air)* After all, you know, ma'am, we know it's there.
(Pulls himself up short, feeling he has committed himself.)

Mrs. W.—*(glaring)* We know it's there!

LAVINIA—Really, George, I must say I don't understand your allusions, and I think you might be more delicate and less personal.

GEORGE—*(becoming a prey to despair)* Go it! Oh, yes, go it, Miss Lavinia Wilfer.

LAVINIA—What you may mean, George Sampson, by your omnibus-driving expressions I cannot pretend to imagine. Neither do I wish to imagine. It is enough for me to know in my own heart that I am not going to—*(she searches for words with which to conclude the sentence)*—to—to go it. *(She turns to Bella)* Bella, it was not worth troubling you about, when you were in a sphere so far removed from your family as to make it a matter in which you could be expected to take very little interest, but George Sampson is paying his addresses to me.

(George becomes extremely self-conscious. He timidly encircles Lavinia's waist with his arm, but encounters a large pin, and utters a sharp exclamation.)

LAVINIA—George is getting on very well *(George wrings his hand)*, and I daresay we shall be married one of these days. I didn't care to mention it when you were with your Bof—*(checking herself)* when you were with Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, but now I think it only sisterly to name the circumstance.

BELLA—Thank you, Lavvy dear; I congratulate you.

LAVINIA—Thank you, Bella. The truth is, George and I did discuss whether I should tell you; but I said to George that you wouldn't be much interested in so paltry an affair, and that it was far more likely you would rather detach yourself from us altogether than have him added to the rest of us.

BELLA—That was quite a mistake, Lavvy.

R. W.—(*mildly to Mrs. Wilfer*) My dear, some more mutton?

Mrs. W.—No, R. W. I thank you, but I have had sufficient.

LAVINIA—You see, Bella, circumstances have changed. George is in a new situation, and his prospects are very good indeed. I should not have had the courage to tell you so yesterday, when you would have thought his prospects poor and not worth notice, but I feel quite bold to-night.

BELLA—(*smiling*) When did you begin to feel timid, Lavvy?

LAVINIA—I didn't say I ever felt timid, Bella. But perhaps I might have said, if I had not been restrained by delicacy towards a sister's feelings, that I have for some time felt independent, too independent, my dear, to subject myself to have my intended match looked down upon. (*To George who again apologetically places his arm around her waist*) You'll prick yourself again, George. (*George withdraws the arm.*)

LAVINIA—(*after a pause, to Mrs. Wilfer, who has fixed her with a steely eye*) Ma, pray don't sit staring at me in that intensely aggravating manner! If you see a black on my nose, tell me so; if you don't, leave me alone.

Mrs. W.—Do you address me in those words? Do you presume?

LAVINIA—Don't talk about presuming, Ma, for goodness sake. A girl who is old enough to be engaged, is quite old enough to object to be stared at as if she were a clock.

Mrs. W.—Audacious one! Your grandmamma, if so addressed by one of her daughters, at any age, would have insisted on her retiring to a dark apartment.

LAVINIA—(*folding her arms and leaning back*) My grandmamma wouldn't have sat staring people out of countenance.

Mrs. W.—She would!

LAVINIA—Then it's a pity she didn't know better, and if my grandmamma wasn't in her dotage when she took to insisting on people's retiring to dark apartments she ought to have been.

Mrs. W.—Impertinent girl! Minx!

LAVINIA—A pretty exhibition my grandmother must have made of herself! I wonder whether she ever insisted on people's retiring into the ball of St. Paul's, and if she did, how she got them there!

Mrs. W. Silence! I command silence!

LAVINIA—I have not the slightest intention of being silent, Ma, quite the contrary. I am not going to be eyed as if I had come from the Boffin's, and sit silent under it. I am not going to have George Sampson eyed as if he had come from the Boffins, and sit silent under it. If Pa thinks proper to be eyed as if he had come from the Boffins also, well and good. I don't choose to, and I won't.

Mrs. W.—You rebellious spirit! You mutinous child! If, in violation to your mother's sentiments, you had condescended to allow yourself to be patronised by the Boffins, and if you had come from those halls of slavery—

LAVINIA—That's mere nonsense, Ma.

Mrs. W.—How?

LAVINIA—Halls of slavery, Ma, is mere stuff and nonsense.

Mrs. W.—I say, presumptuous child, if you had come from the neighbourhood of Portland Place, bending under the yoke of patronage, do you think my deep-seated feelings would be expressed in looks?

LAVINIA—All I think about it is, that I should wish them expressed to the right person, but I am not going to stay here and be stared at all the evening. (*Rising*) Come along, George, we'll go for a walk.

GEORGE—(*also rising*) Yes, dear. Good-night, Mrs. Wilfer (*extending his hand.*)

Mrs. W.—(*touching it with hers*) I wish you good-night.

GEORGE—Good-night, Mr. Wilfer.

R. W.—(*shaking his hand*) Good-night, George.

GEORGE—(*to Bella*) Good-night, Miss Wilfer.

LAVINIA—(*at door, stamping her foot impatiently*) Oh, come along, George, do.

GEORGE—Yes, dear, I'm coming.

Exeunt.

(*Mrs. Wilfer rises with a magnificent dignity.*)



Mrs. W.—R. W. I shall now retire to my bed. Bella, good-night.

BELLA—Good-night, Ma dear (*kisses her.*)

(*R. W. opens door. Exit Mrs. Wilfer with great stateliness. R. W. closes door after her. and gives a deep sigh of relief. Crosses to window and stands looking out.*)

BELLA—(*running to R. W. and kissing him*) Dearest Pa, I am very, very sorry to have brought home all this trouble.

R. W.—My pet, don't make yourself uneasy about that. It really is not worth mentioning, because things at home would have taken pretty much the same turn anyway. If your mother and sister don't find one subject to get at times a little wearing on, they find another. We're never out of a wearing subject, my dear, I assure you.

BELLA—Poor dear little Pa!

R. W.—My gracious me! this is very extraordinary!

BELLA—What is, Pa?

R. W.—Why here's Mr. Rokesmith now coming up the garden path.

BELLA—(*greatly flurried*) No, no, Pa, surely not.

R. W.—Yes, there he is! Look!

(*Bella runs to window to look out. Street door heard to open and shut.*)

R. W.—My dear, he's come in.

Enter John Rokesmith.

JOHN—My dear, dear girl; my gallant, generous, noble girl. (*Catches Bella in his arms*) I knew

you would come here so here I am. My love, my life! You are mine!

BELLA—Yes, I am yours if you think me worth taking.

(*They embrace.*)

BELLA—But we must think of dear Pa. I haven't told Pa.

R. W.—(*faintly*) I wish first, my dear, that you'd have the kindness to sprinkle me a little, for I feel as if I was—going.

BELLA—(*kissing him*) We'll break it to you gently, Pa.

R. W.—My dear, you broke so much in the first—Gush, if I may so express myself, that I think I am equal to a good large breakage now.

JOHN—(*joyfully*) Mr. Wilfer, Bella takes me, though I have no fortune, and at present no occupation: nothing but what I can get in the life before us. Bella takes me.

R. W.—(*feebly*) Yes, I should rather have inferred, my dear sir, that Bella took you from what I have within these few minutes remarked.

BELLA—You don't know, Pa, how ill I have used him?

JOHN—You don't know, sir, what a heart she has!

BELLA—You don't know, Pa, what a shocking creature I was growing when he saved me from myself.

JOHN—You don't know, sir, what a sacrifice she has made for me.

R. W.—My dear Bella and my dear John Rokesmith, if you will allow me so to call you—

BELLA—Yes do, Pa, do. I allow you and my will is his law. Isn't it, dear John Rokesmith?

(He catches her in his arms and kisses her.)

R. W.—I think, my dears, that if you could make it convenient to sit one on one side of me, and the other on the other, we should get on rather more consecutively, and make things rather plainer.

(They seat themselves on sofa L.C.)

R. W.—That's better. Now, I think John Rokesmith mentioned, a while ago, that he had no present occupation.

JOHN—None.

BELLA—No, Pa, none.

R. W.—From which I argue that he has left Mr. Boffin?

BELLA—Yes, Pa, and so—

R. W.—Stop a bit, my dear. I wish to lead up to it by degrees. And Mr. Boffin has not treated him well?

BELLA—*(flaring up)* Has treated him most shamefully, dear Pa.

R. W.—Of which a certain mercenary young person distantly related to myself could not approve? Am I leading up to it right?

BELLA—*(with a little tearful laugh)* Could not approve, sweet Pa.

R. W.—Upon which the certain mercenary young person distantly related to myself, having previously observed and mentioned to myself that prosperity was spoiling Mr. Boffin, felt that she must not sell her sense of what was

right and what was wrong, of what was true and what was false, and what was just and what was unjust, for any price that could be paid by her to any one alive. Am I leading up to it right?

(Bella laughs and kisses him.)

R. W.—And therefore this mercenary young person distantly related to myself refused the price, took off the splendid fashions that were part of it, put on the comparatively poor dress that I had last given her, and trusting to my supporting her in what was right, came straight to me. Have I led up to it?

(Bella's arm has stolen round R. W's. neck and she buries her face on his shoulder.)

R. W.—The mercenary young person distantly related to myself did well! I admire this mercenary young person distantly related to myself more in this dress than if she had come to me in China silks, Cashmere shawls, and Golconda diamonds. I love this young person dearly. I say to the man of this young person's heart, out of my heart, and with all of it,—My blessing on this engagement betwixt you, and she brings you a good fortune when she brings you the poverty she has accepted for your sake and the honest truth's.

(He lifts up her face and kisses her, then shakes John by the hand.)

R. W.—*(rising after a little pause)* Hem! Have you thought at all about telling your mother?

BELLA—Yes, Pa.



R. W.—And your sister Lavvy, for instance, my dear?

BELLA—Yes, Pa. I think we had better not enter into any particulars with them at present.

R. W.—I quite agree with you, my dear. (*After a slight hesitation*) John Rokesmith being acquainted with your Ma, my love, I need have no delicacy in hinting before him that perhaps your Ma is a little wearing.

BELLA—(*laughing*) A little, patient Pa.

R. W.—Well! we'll say, strictly in confidence among ourselves, wearing; we won't qualify it. And as your sister's temper is also a little wearing at times, I do think it would be better to say nothing about the matter just now. I am afraid though, my precious, that we shall look very meagre and poor here, and be at best but very uncomfortable after Mr. Boffin's house.

BELLA—(*softly*) I don't mind, Pa, I could bear much harder trials for John.

JOHN—My own sweet darling! (*He embraces her—she remains with her head buried on his breast.*)

R. W.—(*gaily*) Well! when you—when you come back from retirement, my love, and reappear on the surface, I think it will be time for John Rokesmith to say good-night, or we shall be having your sister Lavvy back.

BELLA—(*emerging from the embrace*) Yes, John, Pa is quite right, so off you go, sir. Don't hang back.

R. W.—Now, my dears, I'll go to the other side of room while you say good-night, and seem not to belong to you. (*Crosses R.*)

(John takes Bella in his arms and whispers something in her ear. She listens attentively and claps her hands delightedly.)

JOHN—*(handing Bella to R. W.)* Mr. Wilfer, I can't spare Bella but I must lend her to you. Good-night, my dearest.

(Kisses her again and exit. Street door heard to close. Bella stands looking out of window. She waves her hand then turns to R. W. with a happy little sigh.)

R. W.—My dear, you most unquestionably *are* a lovely woman.

BELLA—Oh, Pa, I am so thankful and happy. Listen, sir, your lovely woman was told her fortune just now. It won't be a large fortune, because if the lovely woman's intended gets a certain appointment that he hopes to get soon, she will marry on a hundred and fifty a year. But that's at first, and even if it should never be more, the lovely woman will make it quite enough. But that's not all, sir. In the fortune there's a certain fair man—a little man—who, it seems, will always find himself near the lovely woman, and will always have kept, expressly for him, such a peaceful corner in the lovely woman's little house as never was. Tell me the name of that man, sir.

R. W.—Is he the Knave in the pack of cards?

BELLA—Yes, he's the Knave of Wilfers! Dear Pa, the lovely woman means to look forward to the fortune that has been told for her so delightfully, and to cause it to make her a

much better lovely woman than she ever has been yet. What the little fair man is expected to do, sir, is to look forward to it also, by saying to himself when he is in danger of being over-worried, I see land at last !

R. W.—I see land at last !

BELLA—Now, sir, you may kiss the lovely woman before she runs away, so thankful and so happy. O yes, little fair man, so thankful and so happy.

(He kisses her. Exit Bella. R. W. stands looking lovingly after her.)

CURTAIN.

THE HOLLY-TREE INN

FROM

BOOTS AT THE HOLLY-TREE INN

CHARACTERS.

HARRY WALMERS.

A bright, good-looking, well-set up little fellow, about 8 years old. He wears plum-coloured tail coat and drab breeches, tall hat and travelling cloak.

NORAH GAY.

A pretty child, about 7 years old. She is dressed in a light-coloured frock and a coal-scuttle bonnet. She also wears a travelling cloak.

MR. WALMERS (*Harry's father*).

A tall handsome man of some 40 years of age. He wears a riding suit, cloak, and a tall beaver hat.

MRS. CRADDOCK (*Landlady of the Holly-Tree Inn*).

A plump, motherly, middle-aged woman.

COBBS (*Boots at the Holly-Tree Inn*).

Period: About 1820.

SCENE.

Coffee-room at the Holly-Tree Inn on the Great North Road. A cheerful fire is burning in large open fireplace, back. Door back R. Sideboard L. Window L. Another Door R. Wooden settle and table R. C. Grandfather Clock, R. Chairs, couches, etc. The room is in darkness, and the wind is heard howling round the house. Mrs. Craddock discovered dozing in chimney-corner. Clock strikes seven. She starts up.

Mrs. C.—Dear, dear, dear. Seven o'clock! Fancy me dropping off like that, and the coach more'n due. (*Calling*) Cobbs, Cobbs.

COBBS—(*outside*) Comin', mum, coming'.

Enter Cobbs with two candelabras.

Mrs. C.—Quick, man, quick, and set some covers. The coach'll be here directly, and on such a night, likely as not, some traveller may prefer stopping here to going on.

COBBS—Right, mum, I'll soon have everything ready. (*He takes cloth from sideboard drawer, and begins laying table.*)

Mrs. C.—(*looking out of window*) Lord! how the wind blows! I don't remember such a storm for years. (*Sound of horses' hoofs and of*



HARRY WALMERS

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wheels heard faintly in distance). Ah! here she comes (*crosses to door, & back*). Tom—George! Look alive, lads, the coach is comin' round the bend. (*The sounds grow louder and then suddenly cease as the coach draws up outside inn*).

A VOICE—Hulloa! House there!

COBBS—(*at table*) Any travellers, mum?

Mrs. C.—Not as I can see. Wait, though, there's someone a-gettin' out. Why, bless us, what's this? Here's two mites a-comin' in, and nobody with 'em seemin'ly. Whatever can two such children as them be doin' out alone, on such a night, too?

COBBS—(*crossing to window and peering out*) Why, Mrs. Craddock, it's young Master Harry Walmers from the Elmses, down by Shooter's Hill, twenty mile away. T'other one's little Miss Norah Gay, his sweetheart, he allus used to call her.

Mrs. C.—Are you sure?

COBBS—Certain sure, mum. I was under gardener at Mr. Walmer's place for five years, afore I come to you last July.

Mrs. C.—Hush! Here they come!

Enter Harry and Norah. His arm is round her neck protectingly. She looks very tired and sleepy.

Mrs. C.—Good-evenin', sir.

HARRY—(*politely*) Good-evening, ma'am. We should like to stop here to-night, if you please. Can we?

Mrs. C.—Why to be sure you can, sir. The young lady looks tired, sir.

HARRY—Yes, I am afraid she is rather tired. She's not used to long journeys, you see. (*To Norah*). It's alright now, Norah, dear. You'll soon be able to go to sleep.

NORAH—(*plaintively*) Oh, Harry, I'm so tired and hungry.

HARRY—(*soothingly*) Of course, you are, dear, but you'll soon have some dinner. (*To Mrs. Craddock*) Can we have some mutton-chops and cherry-pudding, please, ma'am?

Mrs. C.—Why, bless your hearts, o' course you can. Shall I take the little lady's cloak, sir?

HARRY—No, please. Allow me.

(*He removes Norah's cloak, and leads her to the settle, R. C., and makes her as comfortable as possible by converting her cloak and his own into a pillow, which he places under her head.*)

Mrs. C.—(*aside to Cobbs*) Whatever can the precious mites be after doin'?

COBBS—I'll find out, mum. (*Stepping forward*) Good-evening, Master Harry, sir.

HARRY—(*jumping up*) Oh, it's Cobbs! Norah, Norah, look it's Cobbs. (*Catching him by the hand.*) Oh, I am glad to see you, Cobbs.

NORAH—An' so am I! Very glad, Cobbs.

COBBS—Thank 'ee, miss, and thank you, sir. I see you a-getting out of the coach, sir, and thought it was you. I thought I couldn't be mistaken in your height and figure. But what's the object of your journey, sir.

HARRY—(*importantly*) Well, Cobbs, it's matrimonial.

COBBS—Matrimonial, sir?

HARRY—Yes, Cobbs, we are going to be married at Gretna Green. We have run away on purpose. Norah has been in rather low spirits, but she'll be happy now that we have found you, Cobbs. Won't you, Norah?

NORAH—Yes, Harry, but oh, I do so want my dinner.

Mrs. C.—Why, bless us, o' course she does. I'll go down and dish it up with my own hands, miss. You shall have it directly. (*She goes towards door.*)

Mrs. C.—(*stopping*) Oh, Cobbs, come and see to this candle, will you? It wants snuffing.

COBBS—Yes, mum.

(*Takes pair of snuffers from mantelshelf, and pretends to be trimming candle.*)

Mrs. C.—We must manage to keep 'em here somehow or other, till we can get word to Mr. Walmers. Poor gentleman! he must be fair crazy with anxiety.

COBBS—Yes, mum, but we can't do nothin' to-night. There's not a horse in the stable, 'ceptin' them tired out coach ones.

Mrs. C.—True, but we may get a message through after daybreak. They'll be fresher, then. (*Looking at children.*) Bless their hearts, did you ever see such a pair? Look at the way he's watching over her.

Exit Mrs. Craddock.

COBBS—(*polishing some glasses and putting them on table*) Excuse me, sir, but may I ask what may be the exact natur of your plans?

HARRY—Well, Cobbs, we shall go on in the morning and get married to-morrow.

COBBS—Just so, sir. Would it meet your views, sir, if I was to go with you?

BOTH—Oh, yes, Cobbs.

HARRY—Come and sit down between us, Cobbs, and talk to us.

COBBS—Cert'nly, sir.

(*He seats himself between them, and they nestle up close to him.*)

COBBS—Now, sir, if you will excuse my having the freedom to give an opinion, what I should recommend would be this—

NORAH—What, Cobbs, what? Tell us, do.

HARRY—Yes, Cobbs, go on.

COBBS—Well, sir, I'm acquainted with a pony, sir, which, put in a pheayton, that I could borrow, would take you and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior (driving myself if you approved), to the end of your journey in a very short space of time. I am not altogether sure, sir, that this pony'll be at liberty to-morrow, but he's worth waitin' for, sir, even till the day arter. What do you say, sir?

HARRY—(*thoughtfully*) It seems a very good idea, Cobbs.

NORAH—(*kissing Cobbs*) Dear Cobbs!



NORAH GAY

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COBBS—Then, sir, as to your small account here. That can stand over for the present, sir, if you're a-runnin' at all short. Mrs. Craddock won't mind, I know, sir.

HARRY—Thank you, Cobbs, that's very kind of you, but I've got heaps of money. Look! (*Draws a note from his pocket.*) A Bank of England five pound note, Cobbs.

COBBS—Whew! That's a spanking sum of money, Master Harry.

HARRY—Yes, Cobbs, it is. My grandmamma gave it me.

COBBS—Did she, though? A very nice, open-handed lady, your grandmother, sir.

HARRY—Yes, Cobbs, she is. Does your grandmamma ever give you notes, Cobbs?

COBBS—No, sir. I haven't got such a thing, sir.

HARRY—Not as a grandmamma, Cobbs?

COBBS—No, sir.

HARRY—Haven't you, indeed, Cobbs? (*He looks thoughtful.*) A person can do a great deal with a five-pound note, can't a person, Cobbs?

COBBS—That they can, Master Harry.

NORAH—Oh, Harry, when am I going to have my dinner? I am so hungry.

HARRY—(*comfortingly*) Very soon now, dear, very soon. See, here it is.

Enter Mrs. Craddock, bearing tray of food. Cobbs rises.

Mrs. C.—Here you are, sir. Everything as you and your young lady asked for. There (*setting down tray on table*) I haven't been long, have I?

HARRY—(*gravely*) No, indeed, ma'am. Thank you very much.

NORAH—(*clapping her hands*) Oh, Harry, doesn't it smell nice?

Mrs. C.—I'll put the pudding down by the fire to keep warm.

(*She does so, and stands by Cobbs, watching the children. Norah falls to eagerly. Harry takes up his knife and fork, but lays them down again.*)

HARRY—Norah, kiss me and say you love me to distraction, or I won't eat any dinner.

NORAH—(*throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him*) 'Course I does, Harry.

(*He returns the kiss, and with a sigh of satisfaction begins his dinner.*)

Mrs. C.—(*to Cobbs*) Listen to the two babies! It almost makes me feel in love myself, though I'm blessed if I know who with. (*She turns to Harry.*) Is there anything more you want just at present, sir?

HARRY—Well, ma'am, we should like some water to drink, please. And Norah has always been accustomed to half a glass of currant wine at dessert, and so have I.

Mrs. C.—I'll get it at the bar, sir.

Exit.

COBBS—Are you ready for the pudding, Master Harry and Miss Norah?

BOTH—Yes, please.

(Cobbs removes dish and plates and places the pudding before Harry.)

HARRY—*(watching him)* Cobbs.

COBBS—Yes, sir.

HARRY— I like you, Cobbs.

COBBS—Do you, sir, I'm proud to hear it.

HARRY—Yes, Cobbs, and do you know why?

COBBS—Can't say, I'm sure, Master Harry.

HARRY—Because Norah likes you, Cobbs.

COBBS—Indeed, sir? That's very gratifying.

HARRY—Gratifying, Cobbs! It's better than millions of the brightest diamonds to be liked by Norah.

COBBS—Certainly, sir.

HARRY—Would you like another situation, Cobbs?

COBBS—Well, sir, I shouldn't object if it was a good 'un.

HARRY—Then, Cobbs, you shall be our head gardener when we are married.

NORAH—Yes, and you shall have two thousand guineas a year.

COBBS—Now, I take that very kind of you, Miss Thank'ee both very much.

HARRY—Not at all, Cobbs. Don't mention it.

(He tucks Norah's arm under his own.)

Enter Mrs. Craddock with drinks, which she places on table.

Mrs. C.—There's your drinks, sir. And now if there's nothing else you'll be wanting, sir, I'll

be seeing after your rooms, for I expect you're both ready to drop, leastways I know the young lady is. Aren't you, my pretty one?

(Kisses Norah, who again is showing decided signs of sleepiness.)

Mrs. C.—You don't mind my kissing your young lady, do you, sir?

HARRY—Not at all, ma'am. Kissing Norah's the beautifulest thing in all the world.

Mrs. C.—I'm sure it is.

Exit.

HARRY—*(climbing off settle)* Cobbs.

COBBS—Yes, sir.

HARRY—Is there any good walks in this neighbourhood?

COBBS—Why, yes, Master Harry. There's Love Lane.

HARRY—Get out with you, Cobbs. You're joking.

COBBS—Beggin' your pardon, sir, I'm not. There really is Love Lane, sir, and pleasant walk it is, and proud I shall be to show it to yourself and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, in the morning.

HARRY—*(delightedly)* Did you hear, Norah? We must go and see Love Lane, mustn't we?

NORAH—*(sleepily)* Oh, Harry, don't tease.

HARRY—*(reproachfully)* Oh, Norah! My young May Moon, your Harry tease you?

NORAH—Yes *(plaintively)* I want to go home.

COBBS—Mrs. Harry Walmers, Junior, is fatigued, sir.





HARRY—(*walking up and down in deep thought, his hands in his pockets*) Yes, Cobbs, I'm afraid she is rather tired. You see she's not used to being away from home, and she's in rather low spirits. (*Thoughtfully*) I wonder whether she'd like a biffin.

COBBS—A what, Master Harry?

HARRY—A Norfolk biffin. Have you got one, Cobbs?

COBBS—Well, I can't say that I have, sir. But, beggin' your pardon, Master Harry, I wouldn't disturb Miss Norah, not if I was you. All she wants is a good long rest, sir. Look, she's fast asleep now.

HARRY—Perhaps you're right, Cobbs. (*yawning*) I think I'm rather sleepy too. (*Climbs into chair*) I'll just shut my eyes till the rooms are ready, and then I'll carry Norah upstairs. (*Closes his eyes.*)

COBBS—That's a capital idea, sir.

HARRY—(*in a sleepy voice*) We'll have a—lovely—walk—to-morrow, won't—we—Cobbs?

COBBS—That we will, sir. (*Watches Harry for a moment*) Why, bless the little gentleman if he ain't asleep too.

Enter Mrs Craddock.

COBBS—Hush, mum, look! (*Indicates the sleeping children.*)

Mrs. C.—(*in a low voice*) Cobbs, there's a gentleman on horseback a-comin' down the road, fit to break his neck.

Perhaps it's some 'un after the children.

(Cobbs tiptoes to window and looks out. Sound of a galloping horse heard approaching.)

COBBS—It looks like Mr. Walmers' figure, mum.
Ah, he's stopping.

(A moment's pause.)

Enter Mr. Walmers. His cloak is powdered with snow.

Mr. W.—*(to Mrs. C.)* Are you the landlady of this inn?

Mrs. C.—Yes, sir. I—

Mr. W.—Tell me, quick, have you seen anything of two children—a boy and a girl?

Mrs. C.—Yes, sir. *(Points out the sleeping children.)*
There they are, sir, safe and sound.

Mr. W.—*(sinking into a chair and covering his face with his hands.)* Thank God! Thank God!

COBBS—*(stepping forward)* I beg pardon, sir.

Mr. W.—*(looking up)* What, Cobbs! You here!

COBBS—Yes, sir, your most obedient.

(Hesitatingly) Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I hope you're not angry with Master Harry. Master Harry's a fine boy, sir, and will do you credit and honour, sir.

Mr. W.—*(rising and shaking Cobbs' hand)* No, Cobbs. No, my good fellow. Thank you.

(Turns to Mrs. Craddock) I can never sufficiently acknowledge, ma'am, your kind care of these children.

Mrs. C.—*(with a curtsey)* Oh, Mr. Walmers, sir.

Mr. Walmers crosses to the sleeping Harry—stands a moment looking down at him—kisses

him softly on the forehead—then gently shakes him by the shoulder.)

Mr. W.—*(softly)* Harry! Harry, my dear boy.

(Harry stirs—opens his eyes and sees his father.)

HARRY—Father! *(climbs out of chair)* Oh, father, please, please don't be angry with Norah—it was all my fault—it was truly.

Mr. W.—*(very kindly)* I am not angry, my boy. Come here and tell me why you went away from me.

(He leads Harry to chair and takes him on his knee.)

HARRY—Oh, father, we did so want to be married, so we thought we'd run away to Gretna Green, like you and mother did, father.

Mr. W.—*(kissing him)* My boy, you must be patient, and wait a little while. And now get your hat and cloak, and come home.

HARRY—*(with a little sob)* Yes, father.

(He does so—looks at Norah—then at his father.)

HARRY—But, father, are we to leave Norah here?

Mr. W.—Yes, Harry, but not for long. I passed her mother's chaise upon the road, so she too will soon be here to claim her little runaway.

HARRY—Please may I—please, dear father, may I—kiss Norah before I go?

Mr. W.—You may, my boy.

(Mr. Walmers walks to door, back, and stands there, by Cobbs and Mrs. Craddock. Harry

creeps softly to the settle and gently lays his lips on Norah's cheek, then steals away to door.

Mr. Walmers lifts him up in his arms and exeunt.

Cobbs and Mrs. Craddock, visibly affected, stand looking out after them.

CURTAIN.

N.B.—*When the curtain rises again, Mrs. Craddock is by settle, watching the sleeping Norah.*

Cobbs is at window, looking out along the road.

The sound of horses' hoofs is heard dying away in the distance.







